THE LETTERS OF DISRAELI TO LADY CHESTERFIELD AND LADY BRADFORD

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THE LETTERS OF DISRAELI

TO

LADY CHESTERFIELD *and* LADY BRADFORD

THE RIGHT HON. BENJAMIN DISRAELI

The Letters of
DISRAELI

To Lady Chesterfield
And Lady Bradford

Edited by the Marquis of Zetland

Foreword by André Maurois

VOLUME ONE

1873 to 1875

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FOREWORD

The loves of old men are as touching, as sincere, as those of young men. They possess the purity of friendship, but all the mournful disquiet and the fabric of love. There are few examples more perfect than the strong and lasting love of Disraeli for Lady Bradford, a love which endured until his death.

It was after the death of his wife and at a time when he was almost seventy years old that the old minister, immersed in the deepest sadness, found again two charming sisters whom he had known—Anne, Countess of Chesterfield, and Selina, Countess of Bradford. They were Lord Forester's daughters; Lady Chesterfield was two years older than Disraeli, Lady Bradford fifteen years younger. Both of them were grandmothers but Lady Bradford was still a coquette while her sister had accepted old age and was a tender and serious grandmother. Certainly Lady Chesterfield was more suited to the part of the sure, faithful friend, worthy in every way of the confidence of the party leader and prime minister. But men are unjust and reason does not rule love. Disraeli devoted himself passionately to the conquest (quite sentimental and pure) of Lady Bradford, who escaped him, and allowed himself to be consoled by Lady Chesterfield. From 1873 until his death, he wrote the two incomparable sisters about sixteen hundred letters—five hundred to Lady Chesterfield and

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eleven hundred to Lady Bradford. These letters, which are published in these volumes, form a most interesting document for both historical study of those times and intimate information about Disraeli.

To understand the letters thoroughly it is necessary to recall certain traits of Disraeli's character:

(a) Disraeli is a timid man. He has been so since childhood. A Jew by birth, in a time when Jews did not have even civil rights, he has, in spite of his conversion, felt all about him, since he was a schoolboy, a never-ending hostility. Although he is a loyal member of his party and a generous political adversary, he is one of the most abused men in the country. He has hidden sadness and wounds beneath an expressionless mask; he has been spiritual, amusing; he has triumphed; he has become leader of the Conservatives and the familiar of kings. But he is still a wounded man and he has need of sympathy.

(b) Now his nature brings it about that he can only find this sympathy in women. In a group of men he is not at his ease. He has a horror of club life. He is solitary, like all the timid. "I detest society really, for I never entered it without my feelings being hurt. I cannot say I am happy in solitude, but one is tranquil and may be profound." Solitude, charming in the country where the soul finds refuge in beautiful and creative reveries, becomes sad in the midst of great cities. "Loneliness in a great city meets you with the wings of your imagination furled, and human sympathy would be grateful then, even to a Richelieu." Since his childhood he has had a romantic need of devoting himself to a woman. He cannot be happy unless he has in his life a woman to whom he can do

homage with his victories and from whom he can demand asylum in defeat. Not that Disraeli has ever been a Don Juan. The great romantics are not sensual. They seek excitement, not pleasure. Even beauty plays a rather weak part in Disraeli's attachments. He has been the soul of tender devotion to his wife, who was an absurd woman; he feels (very sincerely) a knight's love for the Queen. If he is attracted by Lady Bradford's charm, this charm, in a woman of fifty-five, is composed of vivacity of manner and spirit rather than beauty.

(c) Like all romantics, Disraeli has an infinite capacity for being unhappy. When women encounter such natures they always make them suffer a little. His letters to Lady Bradford are full of complaints. He reproaches her for scarcely replying to his letters. Everyone writes him faithfully, even the Queen, "except the only person of whom a single line would have been precious." . . . "No answer to my telegram, cruel Lady. . . ." She does not reply because she is disturbed by the content of this correspondence. "To love as I love and rarely to see the being one adores is a lot which I never could endure." They are the letters of a lover. Lady Bradford does not wish a lover. She has a husband, girls to marry off; she does not wish to be compromised by an attachment which is rather ridiculous. This all-powerful old man often bores her. A prime minister is nothing to a woman after she has won his devotion. She goes as far as forbidding him to take part in a masked ball where he wishes to meet her. She reads his books carelessly; she lets him see that she has forgotten the names of the characters in them. He suffers from all that. He knows that his sufferings are a bit fool-

ish, but a certain voluptuous enjoyment in suffering is a part of the pleasures of a romantic. "Your feelings to me are not the same as mine to you. That is natural and reasonable. Mine make me sensitive and perhaps exigeant, and render my society in public embarrassing to you, and therefore not agreeable. Unfortunately for me, my imagination did not desert me with my youth. I have always felt this a great misfortune."

(d) Like all romantics, Disraeli has an infinite capacity for devotion. This man of great ambitions would neglect all the business of state to see Lady Bradford a quarter of an hour longer. The business of the heart is more important for him than any other. "The page of human life is quickly read and one does not care to dwell upon it, unless it touches the heart." He confides to his friend state secrets; he makes bishops to please her. In the House of Commons, during a speech of Gladstone's (to which he must reply) he sits on his bench and scribbles a note to Lady Bradford. Gladstone would certainly have been surprised if, while he was thundering, he could have read the letter which his rival was writing. Old, gouty, asthmatic, Disraeli goes into society in order to see Selina. The messengers of the Government are at the service of his Lady, "they may wait at your house the whole day and are the slaves of your will." At a dinner party Baron de Rothschild sees that Disraeli is thoughtful and sad. The Baron fears complications in foreign affairs, a war, but the current humor of Lady Bradford is the sole cause of Disraeli's sadness.

All that could be laughable, if the feelings of the old Disraeli were not enveloped in the same brilliant mist as

the dreams of Vivian Grey or of Contarini Fleming. In spite of his age, his infirmities, his self-deception, he still has a great love of life. There is one word he has used endlessly—"magic"—and in fact he is a magician. He touches with the magic wand of his style those women who are no longer young and he makes them princesses clothed in moonlight. Flowers that are sent him seem to have been plucked in the forests of Shakespeare or Botticelli's fields; the parks of his friends are enchanted isles always illumined "with the soft effulgence of the crescent moon." So little English in his effusions, his avowals, he has learned from the English their genuine love of nature. He knows how to talk about the trees and gardens, the yew and the box at Hughenden. The poetry of nature, always present in his books, throws around his old love an atmosphere of the songs of birds, the perfume of a summer's night, the glory of flowers, which, combined with the sincerity of his tenderness, compose a feeling at which one smiles with indulgence and sympathy.

So an intimate little drama is unfolded in this correspondence. It does not lack variety, for as time goes on one sees passionate love lessen and calm friendship grow. "No feelings, only facts," Lady Bradford commanded at the beginning. But at the end she does not need to command and Disraeli thinks only of telling her about himself. But to tell her about himself is to tell her about all Europe. His letters are as covered with portraits as the walls of his country house. Here is the Queen, in her little private chamber, with choice works of art by Meissonier. Here is the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII, and the little princesses who are scrambling on all fours under the table

and pinching the legs of the prime minister. Here is Greville—Disraeli did not lose his sense of humor as he grew old—"Greville was the vainest being that I ever knew, and I have read Cicero and was intimate with Bulwer Lytton." Here is the Minister of Great Britain in Washington, who invariably begins his letters with the following phrase: "I wonder why I write, for I have really nothing to say." Here is Lytton, Viceroy of India, when with his wife he visits Hughenden: "She rules her husband but that, I suppose, is always the case when marriages are what is called happy."

A mummy in appearance, but young in heart, the old minister is on the road to death. Rains have ruined his garden and strength leaves him. He still finds a poetic phrase to announce this to his friends: "The stars in their course have fought against me." But events cannot beat Disraeli to the ground because, like all men of grand imagination, he creates his life for himself. When the real world becomes hostile, he will make for himself an artificial world, "Endymion." What is the difference, for a magician, between writing a romance or living it? There will be found in these volumes a curious conversation in which Bismarck says to Disraeli that, if he had not been Chancellor, he would have been a novelist. Disraeli had been both. Only death could lower the curtain on the strange and brilliant drama this genial actor played for his own pleasure and for ours.

Until the end, he remained the faithful correspondent of the incomparable sisters. On the 22nd of April, 1881, his secretary, Lord Rowton, wrote to Lady Bradford: "He often said he knew he had no chance, and seemed to wish

almost that the doctors would tell him so. But they did not know—or would not tell him—and so he glided on till the ship of his life got among the clouds and the breakers and he began to sink without knowing where he was. And so it came that he had not the opportunity of sending a word to some to whom, as I thought I could see, he would have sent a loving message had he known what was so near." Did she feel perhaps some remorse for having made him suffer so often? It is probable that she forgot it quickly. And besides, why remorse? She had been, for this man of sentiment incapable of living without a romance, the pretext of his last dreams. That is the rôle of women, to awaken by their coquetry the illusions of old men and to guide them gently to death amidst the naïve concerns of adolescence.

ANDRÉ MAUROIS

PREFACE

So far as is known Disraeli had one godchild only—the Hon. Richard Orlando Beaconsfield Bridgeman, second son of Lord and Lady Newport and grandson of Orlando, 3rd Earl of Bradford. That Disraeli should have agreed to stand sponsor for the small son of the then Lord Newport, is in itself an indication of the special relation in which he stood to the Bridgeman family. To his godson there came by bequest the letters which Disraeli wrote during the years 1873–1881, to his grandmother, Lady Bradford—the Selina of the correspondence—and to his great-aunt, Anne, widow of George, 6th Earl of Chesterfield.

On January 9th, 1917, gallant Dick Bridgeman, then Flag-Commander the Hon. R. O. B. Bridgeman, R.N., D.S.O.,—sailor, artist, and naturalist—lost his life in the service of his country, being drowned off the mouth of the Rufigi River in East Africa. And from him the letters passed by bequest to his sister, Lady Beatrice Pretyman, in whose possession they now are. It is by her desire that this remarkable correspondence is now made available to the public. By the courtesy of the Bridgeman family, a number of the letters were printed either in whole or in part in the last two volumes of the authorised *Life of Disraeli* by Mr. George Erle Buckle. Without the permission of the Beaconsfield Trustees, Lady Beatrice would

scarcely have felt justified either in republishing those which were printed in the *Life,* or in making public the remainder of the correspondence. She is especially indebted, therefore, to Mr. Buckle for his courtesy in securing for her in the first place the consent of the Trustees and of the *Times,* as owners of the copyright of *The Life of Disraeli,* to reproduce letters which have already appeared in that work; and in the second place that of the Beaconsfield Trustees to make public those which have not hitherto seen the light of day. I would add an acknowledgment of my own indebtedness to Mr. Buckle's two admirable and authoritative volumes for the assistance which I have derived from them in the task of piecing together a sufficiently consecutive narrative to make the letters themselves intelligible.

One word as to my treatment of the letters themselves. Many of them were written in a great hurry and they are full, consequently, of the sort of abbreviations which a man writing under great pressure might be expected to make use of. Thus Disraeli constantly wrote wh. for which; cd. for could; witht. for without; o'cl. for o'clock; Dss. for Duchess, and so on. While these do not offend the eye in the originals, they look crude and are irritating to read in print; and I have, therefore, had the words printed in full. On the other hand, I have retained Disraeli's spelling of such words as *favorable, honor, sate* (for sat) and other similar forms.

For the illustrations which accompany these two volumes, I am more particularly indebted to Lady Mabel Kenyon-Slaney, to the Countess Dowager of Bradford, and to the

present Earl of Bradford—daughter, daughter-in-law and grandson respectively of the Lady Bradford of the letters, and to Lady Margaret Duckworth and Lady Victoria Herbert, C.B.E., granddaughter of Anne, Countess of Chesterfield.

ZETLAND

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VOLUME ONE

INTRODUCTION

The contact between nations and the happenings arising therefrom; the inexorable sequence of events in the affairs of men; the continuous "coming to be," if we may borrow in this connection from the vocabulary of philosophy—these phrases are an indication of man's consciousness of a process, irresistible and evolutionary in kind, one which it is, perhaps, difficult to understand and impossible to control, yet one which it is equally impossible to ignore. Is this what we mean by history? Strictly speaking, the actual process should be spoken of as history in the making; for what the historian purports to do is to render static that which is essentially dynamic, so that by objectifying them he may present the results of a continuous process so far as possible in an intelligible form. In other words he weaves a pattern for us upon the loom of time, employing as his weft the best contemporary records that are available. Such records are of varying kinds, ranging from coins and inscriptions to documents formal and informal, official and private. In plying his craft the craftsman will make use of State papers to provide him with the broad outlines of his pattern, for they possess the qualities necessary for the construction of his ground plan—accuracy and authority. For filling in detail and giving life to his picture he will seek less formal documents and above all the private let-

ters of persons who, from the accident of their position, have been able to bring influence to bear upon the progress of events. To such documents there attaches a special value, for of all contemporary records they alone are likely to possess in a high degree the quality of spontaneity. Of such a kind are the letters which form the subject of this book. A word as to the period to which they refer.

The Victorian era in Great Britain; the golden age of individualism. Parliament dominated by persons rather than by policies—Peel and Palmerston, Gladstone and Disraeli. The House of Commons drenched in a turgid flood of resonant, if sometimes florid, eloquence. Disraeli, a strange and forceful figure; at one time a dandy attracting attention by the wild extravagance of his foppery; in later days a Sphinx, nodding deceptively upon the Treasury bench as if moving inconsequently in a land of everlasting dreams. An enigmatic, epigrammatic and, paradoxically, in these days which placed a crown upon a career of extraordinary vicissitudes, a grim and pathetically lonely man. Mountebank or magician? Some thought the one, some the other. An unusual figure anyway; one in the eyes of children—even of those whom he especially befriended—bizarre and, indeed, a little terrifying. In the society of Englishmen a man a little apart—self-centred, self-opinionated, dominating to all appearances, yet behind the veil not wholly at his ease, self-conscious—even, it seems, a little timid. "I like him very much better than any man," he wrote of Monty Corry, afterwards

Lord Rowton; "but as a rule, except upon business, male society is not much to my taste." [1] There is, indeed, ample evidence in these letters alone, of Disraeli's shyness in this respect. Often he complained of loneliness even in London; and when the obvious remedy was suggested to him, he rejected it—". . . I hate clubs, not being fond of male society." [2] Back in his childhood might, perhaps, be found the root cause of that. At school among English boys, the youth of foreign extraction with the foreign appearance and the foreign name had never been fully accepted as one of themselves, had never quite penetrated the distinctive freemasonry of English boyhood. Yet attracted by, and attractive to, English women. A man passionately appreciative of beauty and clamouring for sympathy; a man capable of deep devotion; an ardent and faithful lover; a man whose heart remained young even when his body grew old and physical affliction robbed it of its grace and vigour. "I require sympathy; but male sympathy does not suit me, and I am fastidious as to the other sex." Thus to Lady Bradford in May 1875. In a letter to the same correspondent written just twelve months before, he had confessed that he felt fortunate in having a female Sovereign. "I owe everything to woman; and if in the sunset of life I have still a young heart, it is due to that influence."

What material for the historian the private letters of such a man! A man whose inner fires burned bright and seemingly inexhaustible—a man driven by his own emo-

[1] Letter to Lady Bradford, October 26th, 1874.
[2] Letter to Lady Bradford, October 1st, 1875.

tional exuberance to share his hopes and fears, his disappointments and his victories with others. "I wish," once wrote his father, "that your organisation allowed you to write calmer letters,"—a natural though a futile wish. With Mary Anne, Countess of Beaconsfield, alive—the tenderly cherished companion of whom at the age of seventy-seven he said that she was more of a mistress to him than a wife—there was at his side the confidante that his effervescent temperament demanded. But when Mary Anne was suddenly taken from him, it was as though something had been torn from his very being. Where, now, was he to turn for that sweet and intimate companionship which through three and thirty years she had never failed to give him?

As a young man of thirty, or thereabouts, Disraeli, disappointed by his failure to storm the political heights which, to his intense chagrin, had remained impervious to the most violent of his assaults, turned elsewhere for consolation; and in the society of a circle of fair women to whose brilliance the world of fashion owed much of its own distinction, he found it. The famous Sheridan sisters—"the handsomest family in the world," Disraeli thought—smiled upon him and had, he remarked in a letter to his sister, a very proper idea of his merits. No wonder that he confided to the sympathetic Sarah that he liked them all. Prominent among the ladies of this brilliant and exclusive coterie were the daughters of the then Lord Forester, noted beauties of their day; the eldest, Anne, married to the Earl of Chester-

THE DAUGHTERS OF LORD FORESTER

field; the youngest, Selina, destined to become a little later the wife of the then Lord Newport, afterwards Earl of Bradford. Yet delightful though he found the society of these two ladies even in those early days, little can he have foreseen the intimate part which, at a much later date, they were to play in the fiery sunset of his life.

With the Newports he had remained on terms of agreeable, if not intimate, friendship throughout the period of his own married life. "I think we shall have a very active and interesting campaign," he had written to Lord Newport in April 1850, when he was attacking the Government for their indifference in face of the acute agricultural distress which had set in on the final repeal of the Corn Laws. He thought it more than likely, he had added, that the Opposition would be lined up for an attack in the House of Commons in the course of the first week after the Easter recess—"I shall hope to see you then, charging at the head of the brilliant cavalry of Melton, like the true Cavalier which you are!" And he had concluded his letter with a word of remembrance for Lady Newport—"Pray make my compliments acceptable to Lady Newport and believe me with sincere regard, etc." And again when in March 1868, he had at last become Prime Minister—"climbed to the top of the greasy pole," as he described it—he had hastened to send Lord Bradford, as he had then become, a cordial invitation to resume under his own leadership the office of Lord Chamberlain which he had filled competently enough under the ægis of Lord Derby—"My dear Lord, I was very sorry to miss you yesterday, particularly as it has occasioned

you the trouble of receiving this letter. I hope that my appeal may be successful when I request that you will allow me to assure the Queen that you have consented under the new Ministry to fill that office which you so efficiently occupied in that of Lord Derby."

But it was not until the summer of 1873, some months after the death of Lady Beaconsfield, that his relations with Lady Bradford and with her sister, Anne, Countess of Chesterfield, were suddenly lifted on to an entirely different plane.

It was no new thing for Disraeli to carry on an animated correspondence with the more intimate of his companions among the women in whose society he revelled. But seldom, surely, has the historian had placed at his disposal the written evidence of a relationship at once so illuminating and so rare. Of the existence of this strange romance which coloured the last eight years of a remarkable career, the world has long been fully aware. The story of it has been told by Mr. Buckle in the official record of Disraeli's life; but in sentences so measured and so restrained as scarcely to bring home to the reader its truly remarkable nature. As I sit fingering the actual letters of this singular correspondence written day after day, week after week and, indeed, year after year, at odd times and from divers places, on sheets of paper heavily edged with black—incongruous indication of his undying memory of Mary Anne—I am driven constantly to asking myself—is this real, or am I dreaming? Are these, in very truth, leaves torn from the

humdrum book of real life? Can this strange romance be, in very sooth, that of a nineteenth-century Prime Minister of Great Britain?

Consider the nature of the actual letters themselves. Sometimes they consist of many sheets written in ink in a flowing hand; at others of half-sheets scrawled over in pencil —mere "scribblements" as Disraeli himself described them. "A terrible busy day," he told Lady Bradford, in November 1874, "and I steal away from the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Secretary on a false pretence; but really to scribble this rapid line to you . . ."; and from the House of Commons one day in May 1875—"It's going on. I am only out for five minutes for food; but I write to you." Sometimes he wrote in the heat of a debate itself, as for example on July 26th, 1875—"A terrible day. I have not a moment for myself or for you and I absolutely try to write this seated in my place"; and again on April 5th, 1879—"I sent you a very stupid letter yesterday and I send you a stupider one to-day. Indeed it was not a letter yesterday—only a hurried mem. scribbled on my hat in the House of Lords." And when Lady Bradford was in London, messengers passed constantly between Downing Street and Belgrave Square. She was to regard them as being completely at her command, he told her; "a messenger from a Prime Minister to a Mistress of the Horse, cannot say his soul is his own."

But the letters, wheresoever they were written, had one thing in common; envelopes and paper alike were always heavily edged with black. There came a time when Lady

Bradford twitted him with this idiosyncrasy; but Disraeli refused to give it up:

It is strange, but I always used to think that the Queen persisting in these emblems of woe, indulged in a morbid sentiment. And yet it has become my lot and seemingly an irresistible one. I lost one who was literally devoted to me . . . and when I have been on the point sometimes of terminating this emblem of my bereavement, the thought that there was no longer any being in the world to whom I was an object of concentrated feeling overcame me and the sign remained.

This explanation was written in September 1875; and the sign remained until death claimed him. As an additional sign, be it added, Disraeli ever afterwards wore a heavy mourning band on his hat.

Disraeli certainly spoke truly when he declared—as he frequently did—that his heart had remained young. Born in 1804, he was, at the commencement of this new-born and ardent friendship within a year of the span of life allotted by the Psalmist; Lady Chesterfield, now a widow of seven years standing, had actually overstepped it, and Lady Bradford, though seventeen years younger and still happily married, was yet like her sister a grandmother. We may accept without hesitation Mr. Buckle's dictum that "Disraeli's chivalrous devotion to women was independent of physical attraction and the appeal of youth"; yet the feelings of delight which he experienced in the society of these two ladies were so acute as to lead him, not merely to speak of them in the ardent language of a lover, but to

experience all the poignancy of a rejected suitor when, as sometimes happened, he startled one or other of them into administering a mild rebuke. "I observe that you have changed the tone of your letters as you threatened." Thus Disraeli in an undated letter to Lady Bradford, but written apparently sometime in 1874, his pen racing across the paper in a state of uncontrollable emotion. "I thought at the time it was only a bitter joke. . . . It is not strategy on my part to notice this, but I have never had any strategy with you. And if it be a satisfaction to you that at a moment when I have many cares and a horrible despondency, you have added to my troubles and depression, you really may triumph." Strange words, surely, from the pen of a septuagenarian Prime Minister! And so Lady Bradford no doubt thought. Disraeli himself was fully conscious of the absurdity of such outbursts, but he could not help them. "I am certain there is no greater misfortune than to have a heart that will not grow old," he confessed in a letter to Lady Bradford in March 1874; and a day or two later he added in a letter to Lady Chesterfield—"That is my sad lot."

It is clear from the correspondence itself that from the first there was a subtle difference in his feelings towards the two sisters. Though he proposed matrimony to Lady Chesterfield—marriage with Lady Bradford being out of the question—it was well understood in the family circle that he did so mainly with a view to acquiring as her brother-in-law, a surer claim upon the younger sister's society; and he haunted the doorstep of the Bradfords' house in Belgrave Square with the persistence of an infatuated

suitor. "I have got to go to the House of Commons at half-past twelve," he wrote one day in March 1876, "and I know not how long I may be detained there, but if I can I shall take the chance of finding you at home at half-past two." Such letters were frequent. And he fretted and fumed when engagements stood in the way of a possible meeting—"I am engaged to-day to the De la Warrs. Alas! Alas!" And whenever possible he so arranged matters that his engagements should not come between them—"I have refused Clarence House because you and B. were coming to me!" And then, lest Lady Bradford should be disturbed at his having refused a royal summons on her account, he added, "it is not a command." Present or absent she dominated his waking hours, her image refusing to be banished even by the most urgent affairs of State:

I have got the Duke of Cambridge and Lord Napier in the next room and just about to make their bow to me, so I can't write any more, but am very sorry indeed that you will not be visible to-day. To-morrow at three I go to the Faery [Queen Victoria, the Faery Queen of Disraeli's romantic imagination]. We shall meet at dinner at any rate, if not before.

And again:

I am overwhelmed with affairs, but shall not be able to manage or control them if I do not see you. Therefore don't think that a waste of time. I shall call at half-past two with the hope of seeing you for a moment; if I only *see* you as yesterday, it is something.

Odd how youthful were the emotions which burned within his worn and fragile frame, haunting his mind like grim spectres of that saddest of all worlds—the world of might-have-been; chasing one another in a wild and devastating dance across the echoing chambers of his heart. Sometimes it was the desire of seeing her, converted by fear of angering her to an almost pathetic humbleness, that held the floor:

I was grieved not to see you yesterday, but not surprised and for yourself not sorry. . . . I see no chance of our ever meeting again except in general society, and that must be very rare for me who so seldom enter it. The only chance would be that you should modify your earlier hours a little, as the only time I really could call would be after your luncheon if, at this season of the year, you ordered your barouche at four instead of three o'clock, then on days when there was no Cabinet—and that is always twice a week—I might have the chance of the pleasure of seeing you before going to the House of Commons. But this may be too great, or too inconvenient a change in your habits—

and then pique thrust forward, shouldering humility aside, and gave the pen a vicious jab—

—or perhaps even it is not in your power to effect it, for I observe you expect no one to obey you in Belgrave Square, except myself.[3]

At other times the urge to see her was too great to admit

[3] Undated, but written probably in June 1875.

of subterfuge: "I will come to you at one o'clock and lunch with you if you will let me, or do anything to see you." [4]

These letters possess, consequently, a vivid human interest; but they are also of great historical value, for they throw a revealing light upon the social and political background against which this strange drama of septuagenarian sentiment was played. "Lady Bradford seems to know everything," the Duke of Richmond told Lord Cairns in 1876, "down to the most minute details of everything that passes." [5] And the Duke spoke truly. During six of the eight years covered by this romantic friendship, Disraeli was Prime Minister of Great Britain. Throughout much of it the Eastern question loomed large and menacing on the confused and unstable confines of Eastern Europe—the outcome of a perplexing clash, not of policies only, but of deep-rooted racial and religious animosities. If it was not Disraeli's fault, it was at least his misfortune that during a critical period of his Administration reverberations of the feuds of the polygenous and polyglot population of these distant lands should have rumbled distractingly round the hearths of the British people. Torn between fears of Russian ambitions on the one hand and horror inspired by Turkish atrocities on the other, the average Englishman was hard put to it to decide what course his country ought to pursue. Stories of atrocities perpetrated by the Turkish infidel upon the Bulgarian Christian placed in the hands of the Prime Minister's critics a powerful weapon with

[4] Undated.

[5] See Buckle's *Life of Disraeli*, vol. v, p. 241.

which to flagellate the easily awakened conscience of the electorate. It was one which Gladstone was not in the least likely to pass by. Nor did he. Yet for all the fiery passion of his appeal, the spectacle of Russia figuring in the part of disinterested champion of a downtrodden Christendom, was one which was not altogether convincing. Many there were who asked themselves what was germinating behind the passive masks of the men who inspired and directed the policy of Russia—the Emperor and Gortchakoff in St. Petersburg, Schouvaloff in London and Ignatieff in Constantinople. Disraeli was one of them; and to him the question admitted of but one answer: "The Emperor of Russia," he told Lady Chesterfield, "cares as much for the Christians as you do for Spurgeon; and he and all his Court would doff [don?] the turban to-morrow if he could only build a Kremlin on the Bosphorus." Such being his own conviction, he held steadfastly to his pro-Turkish policy; and if at a later date it lost something of the glamour with which he succeeded in investing it, it carried him in the summer of 1878 to the culminating peak of his career. Fresh from his triumph as British Plenipotentiary at the Congress of Berlin, he was rewarded by his Sovereign in July with the Garter; and in August received a striking proof of the homage of his countrymen when the freedom of the City of London was conferred upon him. It was at this time that he was acclaimed as being "at the pinnacle of Ministerial renown, the favourite of his Sovereign and the idol of society." [6]

[6] In the *Times*.

Throughout these days of stress and splendour he talked and wrote with absolute freedom to his two companions:

Public affairs are so grave and pressing that I can hardly command my mind to write a private letter—even to you. I am now going to the Faery who has much to make her disquieted. Bismarck is playing the game of the old Bonaparte. Then I must go to the House of Commons and blow into the air the conspiracy of the Liberals, the Fenians and the *Times* newspaper their organ, to discredit and eventually destroy H.M. Government. . . .

And a few days later:

We shall have peace. I was most vexed at not being able to write to you yesterday; but between peace and war and the Irish Bill I was much pressed. The news from Berlin came in the middle of the night on Monday; but they wisely did not wake me. However, it gave me an appetite for breakfast.[7]

It is extraordinary that Disraeli managed to write so much. "I am naturally a terribly bad letter writer," he told Lady Chesterfield, "and only the bustle of official life kept me at all in epistolary cue." Yet one of the vividest parts of the picture of a Prime Minister's life in those days which these letters give us, is that part of it which portrays him at his writing-table grappling with his daily task. With no amanuensis to relieve him of the physical strain of writing;

[7] Letters to Lady Chesterfield dated May 5th, and 12th, 1875.

with no mechanical aids to lessen the burden of official correspondence, he worked laboriously and unendingly with his pen. Often he heaped imprecations on ink, pens and paper—"This paper, muddy ink and pens . . . entirely destroy any little genius I have and literally annihilate my power of expression," he wrote on one occasion. He was, indeed, extraordinarily dependent on the materials with which he was supplied to do his work; and when paying visits his complaints on this score were frequent and bitter. "It is not only my handwriting," he explained to Lady Bradford in September 1875, "but my ideas and expressions greatly depend upon my pens, ink and paper. I have got my own pens"—he was writing from Bretby, Lady Chesterfield's country seat—"but the ink is like the lake Asphaltites and the paper spongy like an Irish bog. It affects even my spelling." Yet hour upon hour and day after day, despite these irritating handicaps, he wrote on—Dispatches, Minutes, letters—until the pen slipped from his cramped and exhausted fingers. "I have been writing all day," he declared in explanation of the brevity of one of his letters to Lady Bradford, "so my hand cannot go on." It was a familiar tale. "I have been writing since I rose," he told her one day in December 1878, "and now the sun is going to set. My back aches sadly." And it was not as if he had been a man in the full vigour of life. His system was saturated with gout; he suffered severely from bronchitis and during the closing years of his life from asthma. "I cannot breathe and have no sleep," he wrote in August 1877; "last night was the worst I have yet had.

I was up all night sitting in an armchair and leaning over the back of another one." What a picture of human frailty and suffering and—to those who knew how Disraeli toiled and conquered—of God-like heroism.

Finally there emerges from this correspondence a fascinating picture of Disraeli's relations with the Queen. How stiff the formality of the Court of those etiquette-encrusted days! How distant—even from the nearest of her subjects—the Sovereign, round whom, in accordance with the conventions of the age, a defensive hierarchy of Court functionaries revolved. Yet under the influence of Disraeli's magic personality we see the iron chains of custom dissolving before our eyes. "I can only describe my reception by telling you," he wrote in August 1874, "that I really thought she was going to embrace me. She was wreathed with smiles and, as she talked, glided about like a bird." In the early seventies a mere suggestion that a Minister might be seated in the Royal presence would have been regarded as unthinkable—a crude and impossible social solecism. "I remember that Lord Derby after one of his illnesses had an audience of Her Majesty," Disraeli told Lady Bradford, "and he mentioned it to me as proof of the Queen's favor, that Her Majesty had remarked to him how sorry she was she could not ask him to be seated, the etiquette was so severe." Disraeli himself would have been the last person to hold in disrespect a practice thus hallowed by tradition; yet with no such idea in his head he was, nevertheless, the first person to break with it. "The Faery was

very gracious," he wrote in June 1875, "she would make me sit down even in the presence chamber. She says I am never to stand. . . . When I took my leave at the audience, I would put my golden chair back in its place that the breach of etiquette should be kept a secret. So I told her—and she smiled." The admiration and respect which each felt for the other became tinged with feelings of a warmer hue. In Disraeli's own vivid imagination his relations with his Sovereign were suffused with a halo of rich romance. Who but Disraeli could conceivably have told the Queen—as he actually did—that as he pondered during the night watches upon a gift of flowers which she had made him, it occurred to him that the whole thing might be an enchantment and that it was, perhaps, after all no mortal present, but a Faery gift and "came from another monarch—Queen Titania, gathering flowers with her Court in a soft and sea-girt isle and sending magic blossoms which, they say, turn the heads of those who receive them?" [8] For Disraeli Queen Victoria had for some time been, and ever afterwards remained, "the Faery"—the incarnation sometimes of Titania; more often, perhaps, of the "Faery Queen" of the Elizabethan poet, for, as Mr. Buckle has pointed out, "it was after the romantic fashion of Raleigh's service to Queen Elizabeth, that Disraeli conceived of his own service to Queen Victoria." [9]

Disraeli never fell into the error of regarding or of attempting to treat the Queen as the mere figurehead of the

[8] Letter from Disraeli to the Queen, February 25th, 1875. See ch. xi, p. 264.
[9] *Life of Disraeli*, vol. vi, p. 464.

ship of State. He had far too great a respect for her ability and knowledge of what went on around her. When a member of the Diplomatic service created a sensation in Vienna by running off with a famous and attractive *danseuse,* there was an idea in Court circles that news of the affair might be kept from the Queen's ears. Disraeli knew better. "Jem Daly thinks Lady Ely may have kept the whole thing secret from some one," he wrote to Lady Bradford; "but that is impossible. Some one always knows everything." And the Queen's admiration for her Prime Minister was equally well-founded and sincere. "The Queen has now a favour to ask of Lord Beaconsfield," she wrote in the spring of 1877. "It is that his portrait should be painted for her for Windsor by the great artist Angeli who painted herself. . . . Lord Beaconsfield's career is one of the most remarkable in the annals of her Empire, and none of her Ministers has ever shown her more consideration and kindness than he has." The Queen had already presented Disraeli with her own portrait as a token of her regard; and a characteristic account of the ceremony of presentation occurs in a letter written by Disraeli to Lady Bradford in February 1876—"So after admiring it what could I do but say: 'I think I may claim, Madame, the privilege of gratitude,' and dropped on my knee; and she gave me her hand to kiss which I did three times very rapidly, and she actually gave me a squeeze."

It pleased Disraeli to imagine that the Queen viewed his friendship with the Prince of Wales—Prince Hal, as he invariably called him—with a somewhat jealous eye. "This

morning a telegram in cypher, disapproving of my going to Sandringham as I shall catch cold," he told Lady Bradford on April 7th, 1879. "A little jealous on that subject." And on April 16th—"Letter from the Faery . . . Hopes to see me D.V. in a fortnight. Delighted I am not going to Sandringham. On the other hand Prince Hal presses me to go there." There are, indeed, many indications in these letters of the warmth of the Prince's feelings for Disraeli; and the Queen having done her Prime Minister the honour of visiting him at his own home, he signified his intention of following her example. How would this proof of intimacy between her Minister and the heir to the throne be viewed in the highest quarters? Disraeli was not quite sure. His fears proved groundless. "I heard to-day from the Faery," he wrote on January 10th, 1880, "who highly approves of the visit. I thought, on the contrary, we should have had our ears boxed."

It is, indeed, impossible in face of the evidence provided by this correspondence to doubt either the genuineness or the warmth of the feelings which grew up between Disraeli and the Queen—"She opened all her heart and mind to me," he told Lady Bradford on September 12th, 1874, "and rose immensely in my intellectual estimation"; and later in the same letter—"This morning the Queen paid me a visit in my bedchamber"—Disraeli was ill at the time—"What do you think of that?" And both admiration and affection grew as the years slipped by. "The Queen . . . wrote to me one or two letters on friendship and her feelings as to public life and politics," he told Lady Bradford in January

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1876, "very remarkable and such as, I think, never were addressed before to a Minister of State." Such remarks as—"I was with the Faery a long time yesterday, and she was most agreeable and interesting," occur frequently throughout the letters; and the Queen's regret at the defeat of Lord Beaconsfield's Government in 1880, was outspoken and sincere. "H.M. insists upon softening the catastrophe by my dining and sleeping at the Castle," he told Lady Bradford on April 21st of that year; and on May 7th he wrote—"The Faery has sent me her statuette in bronze, very good, very like . . ."

For the rest the letters may be allowed to speak for themselves. To have printed the whole number—about 1,100 to Lady Bradford and nearly 500 to Lady Chesterfield—would have been to overload these volumes. Neither would there have been any advantage in so doing, for in a correspondence so profuse it was inevitable that there should be many which were altogether trivial, or which contained repetitions which would now prove tedious. But I have excluded from this collection none of any importance either from the point of view of their bearing upon Disraeli's character, or of the light which they shed upon the events to which they refer.

THE LETTERS OF DISRAELI
TO
LADY CHESTERFIELD *and* LADY BRADFORD

VOLUME ONE

CHAPTER I

1873

AN ACQUAINTANCESHIP RENEWED

On December 15th, 1872, Mary Anne, Countess of Beaconsfield, died, leaving Disraeli a grievously stricken man. No more would the brightly illumined house in Grosvenor Gate beckon him home when the curtain fell on the drama being played nightly in the House of Commons. Nor, even had circumstances permitted its retention, would he have returned to it with anything but sorely harrowed feelings, for the cherished inmate awaiting him with an expectancy that never languished, impatient to hear from him every detail of the doings of the day, the repository during three and thirty years of the innermost secrets of his heart, had been taken from it, leaving it a cold and empty shell. Those who had come to realise how much his leadership meant to the Conservative party watched him anxiously during these days of woe. Would he, shattered and disconsolate, withdraw from public life and nurse his sorrow in seclusion?

Such fears proved groundless. A prey to melancholy whenever leisure left him time for meditation, Disraeli sought distraction in the vanguard of the political fight. Gladstone's Ministry was visibly cracking. In the country,

feeling as indicated by the by-elections was running strongly against the Government; and into the task of hastening the process of disruption the disconsolate widower threw himself with a vehemence well calculated to keep his mind from brooding. With an almost uncanny appreciation of the situation, he concentrated upon the work of preparing the ground in the constituencies. In the House of Commons the leading members of the Ministry sat—in his own picturesque phraseology—"like a range of exhausted volcanoes," their paroxysms already ended in prostration and their eminent chief capable only of alternating between a menace and a sigh. They might safely be left to complete the process of their own disintegration. This reading of the situation was triumphantly vindicated by events, and before the end of the year he had the satisfaction of pointing to the fulfilment of his forecast in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

I expected when I saw the Queen in March, the decomposition of the Ministry, but it has been more complete than I contemplated. Had Gladstone then gone out, uncommitted on either church or education, and the squabbles of his colleagues unknown, he would have gone out with almost undiminished prestige, and would now have rallied. The firm is now insolvent and will soon be bankrupt. When the Tories return it will be their own fault if their reign be not long and glorious.[1]

The correspondence from which this is an extract did not begin until some months after the death of Mary Anne.

[1] Letter dated September 8th, 1873.

During the early days of his bereavement Disraeli, though he found the hotel life to which his enforced departure from Lady Beaconsfield's house in Grosvenor Gate had driven him, "a cave of despair," eschewed society; for every visit to the houses of friends, as he confessed to Montagu Corry, added to his melancholy. Yet he was not by temperament capable of living a life of action in frigid isolation; and out of the feverish activity with which he threw himself into the political fray during the summer of 1873, there grew an imperious craving for intimate companionship. What profit was there from all this turbulent striving if the hopes and fears accompanying it, the successes and failures resulting from it, could not be shared—and by infinite preference with a woman? It was when in this frame of mind that he became consciously aware once more of the singular charm of two members of the glittering social circle in whose midst he had found consolation for political disappointment in days gone by. When precisely this newly awakened interest in Lady Bradford and in her sister, Anne, Countess of Chesterfield, first revealed itself, is not clear. The occasion seems to have been a chance visit during the summer, for in his letter of September 8th already referred to he writes:

. . . although from paramount duty I attended Parliament this Session, I have never been in society except that delightful week when somehow or other, I think it must have been by magic, I found myself in the heart of your agreeable family.

It is, at any rate, clear from the first letter to Lady Bradford which has been preserved, that before the end of the Session he was conscious of a definite desire for their society:

House of Commons,
July 27th, 1873

Dear Lady Bradford,

You are, in all probability, going to Goodwood, and before you return I shall have left London. I should be more than sorry to do this without seeing you. Perhaps, therefore, you might some day spare me a little quarter of an hour when you are disengaged. My time is now at your command as I expect to-night to wind up our affairs here. It has been an interesting though not a laborious Session.

Ever yours sincerely,

Disraeli

It is probable that this letter was occasioned by his meeting Lady Bradford at a dinner party given by Mr. and Lady Augusta Sturt—afterwards Lord and Lady Alington—for four years later, on July 26th, 1877, Disraeli wrote: "Gussie [Lady Augusta] has asked me to dine there on Sunday, to meet you. It is exactly four years ago, the Sunday before Goodwood, that I met you dining at that very house." At any rate friendship grew apace. Within a few weeks "Dear Lady Bradford" had become "Dearest Lady Bradford," and her society "one of the greatest pleasures" in his life. The doings of mutual acquaintances were discussed with all the freedom of intimacy, as wit-

ness a characteristic comment on Lady Cardigan's forthcoming marriage to the Comte de Lancastre:

Hughenden Manor,
August 29th, 1873

Dearest Lady Bradford,

On September 29th, I propose to have the pleasure of seeing you, which is always one of the greatest pleasures in my life.

I hope your visit to Windermere has been enchanting. They say the weather has been fitful in England generally, but here we have had a summer of romance. I have been here five weeks and have never been out of the grounds, and have scarcely spoken to a human being, except Sir Arthur Helps, who paid me a visit on his way to Balmoral.

On Wednesday last, I received from the lady an announcement of the immediately impending event—"as you have always taken so kind an interest in my welfare." One can scarcely congratulate, but may sincerely wish her every happiness. It sounds very bad.

With very kind regards to Lord Bradford, believe me,
Ever yours,

D

In the early days of this remarkable relationship the letters are cheerily conversational in tone. They consist for the most part of discursive commentaries on men and affairs and of scraps of news of daily happenings, sometimes trivial, at other times important. Comments and news alike are set down on paper with a happy lightheartedness unclouded as yet by the tempestuous emotions which, despite

his years, the growing ardour of Disraeli's feelings was later to evoke. On September 24th he writes to Lady Bradford in ebullient spirits at the prospect of a visit to her:

Brighton,
September 24th, 1873

Dearest Lady Bradford,

You are too thoughtful and too kind. I propose to find myself at Shifnal on Monday next, at 5.59.

You will be a little surprised at my date; but after two months of solitude with everything to charm except the greatest of charms, the human face and voice divine, I thought London might be a relief. It was intolerable, so I came down here. It might have succeeded, for I found our friends the Sturts[2] here, and in the same hotel. She is ever pleasing, and his wondrous rattle is as good as champagne. But alas! she fell ill and fancied it was the fault of Brighton, and they went off at a moment's notice.

Yesterday the Brunows found me out and took me home to dine with them, quite alone. I sate between the Ambassador and Madame—no other guest, not even a *sous-secretaire* of Embassy. We had five servants in the room and a wondrous repast, which, as I live on a "spare radish," was rather embarrassing. They were kind, but it was not lively, though I was amused at the great excitement of Brunow as to English politics, which he flattered himself he concealed. He was always recurring to the Dover election which made a great sensation here. We had telegraphs of the poll every hour and at 10 o'clock they gave me a serenade, or chorale, the most beautiful thing I ever

[2] Afterwards Lord and Lady Alington.

heard. No one knows who were the serenaders—they say a private musical society. Not certainly the Christie Minstrels, who all take off their hats to me when I pass: which is awkward, as I was told I should be as unnoticed here in September as in the woods of Hughenden.

My kind remembrance to Lord Bradford. I cannot express to you the delight I anticipate from seeing you again. It seems to me that the only happy hours I have had in this melancholy year are due to your charming company.

Yours ever,

D

In the case of Lady Bradford friendship grew swiftly into an easy intimacy which is at once reflected in his letters to her. The visit to Weston in the autumn of 1873 advanced matters greatly; and as a proof of the pleasure which his stay there had given, Disraeli received a short time afterwards the gift of a cuckoo clock which had been the subject of good-humoured banter during his visit:

Hughenden Manor,
October 19th, 1873

Dearest Lady Bradford,

Though it is the fall of the leaf, I was roused from my slumbers this morning by the herald voice of spring. At first I thought it was a dream; but it was more than that—it was an enchantment; for it was the gift of one who never moves, or acts, or speaks, but to charm! How kind of you to recollect what I thought was only a sportive promise in the stately woods of Weston!

When shall I ever pass another week like that? amid a

scene so fair and with a companion so full of sympathy and bright intelligence!

I am hers

Ever,

D

Such small, but tangible, evidences of the regard in which he was held touched Disraeli deeply. "I cannot yet bring myself to believe," he wrote a few days later, "that the little bird is not alive. I watch him, often, coming out of his nest. In my solitude he is the only person who speaks to me. So I am grateful, and because also he reminds me of one whose friendship is the consolation of my life." With Lady Chesterfield intimacy ripened less rapidly. His intercourse with her acquired less easily the familiarity which characterised his relations with the younger sister, and his letters to her were marked by greater restraint. He wrote to her at this time, of matters which he might equally have written about to a colleague and in much the same tone. In October he was writing to her about by-elections and the efficiency of the party machinery:

Hughenden Manor,
October 16th, 1873

Dear Lady Chesterfield,

When I arrived in town on Monday, I found at the Carlton a telegram from the chief agent at Taunton announcing the Poll was closed, that exact figures could not, of course, be yet given but that the majority for Slade was about 100. I would not telegraph on this, but left instructions with the

Hall Porter to telegraph to yourself and Lord Derby the precise result when it arrived. It was expected about half-past seven. You know the rest. I believe the unfortunate man misled half England, for he was telegraphing for an hour I have been since told.

As you are interested in elections I enclose you two documents worth perusal. After every Borough Election, an expert visits the scene of action and prepares a confidential Despatch for me, that in so far as is possible I may be thoroughly acquainted with the facts.

It is clear that the personal influence of candidates and their wives will be considerable under the ballot, and it is curious to observe that the cause which gained Dover, lost us Bath.

The other document is a letter from Mr. Gordon, M.P., our Lord Advocate in the last Ministry. He is a very canny man, perhaps the shrewdest even in Scotland. I confess I read his letter with as much surprise as satisfaction.

Here we have summer skies and summer winds. I hope they may bring balm to Lady Carnarvon [3] and yourself.

When you have read the enclosed, be so kind as to tell some one to put them in a blank cover and return them to me. My post town is High Wycombe.

Yours sincerely,

D

The General Election of February 1874 was preceded by a number of by-elections in the autumn, and the rhetorical thrust and counter-thrust in which Disraeli delighted went merrily forward. Some people thought that he lost the

[3] Lady Chesterfield's daughter.

contest at Bath for Lord Grey de Wilton, by the very extravagance of the language in which he publicly denounced the Ministry and stated his conviction that the country had made up its mind to bring to an end their career of "plundering and blundering." Not so Disraeli who wrote to Lady Chesterfield in terms of unabashed assurance as to the wisdom of what he had done:

Hughenden Manor,
October 24th, 1873

Dear Lady Chesterfield,

The glasses have arrived, thanks to you who always think of everybody and everything.

Lady Derby writes to me that Lord Lyons has been paying a visit to Knowsley and says that Comte de Chambord is certain to be elected. Nevertheless, I observe the date of the Assembly is postponed. I think Henri V is like Otho Fitzgerald.

I did not get my official telegram about Hull until last night; it is very satisfactory, considering we were beaten at the General Election by 500. The storm against my letter to Grey was quite factitious, got up by a knot of clever liberal journalists who had, they thought, an opportunity. It has quite evaporated and from the number of letters I daily receive about it from all parts of the country, and from the quotations from it daily cropping up in the Press, I have no doubt it will effect the purpose for which it was written.

I wished to give a condensed, but strictly accurate summary of the career of the Gladstone Ministry. There is not an expression which was not well weighed and which I

could not justify by ample, and even abounding evidence. Lord Salisbury and the Hull Election together, will effectually silence my critics. The fact is, we ought to have won both Bath and Taunton. I enclose you the expert's Report on the latter, as I think all these things interest you.

You do not say anything about the cough. I think, and thought even at the time, that I ought not to have remained at Bretby and that our delightful talks were not good for you; but you must pardon me—I was not proof against the attractions of the interesting scene and your delightful presence, which always makes me happy.

Yours sincerely,

D

Other subjects, however, soon crept in, and in a letter written a few days later he recalls the fact that he has possessed an engraving of her for no less than thirty-five years:

Hughenden Manor,
October 30th, 1873

Dear Lady Chesterfield,

I send you a little book which, I think, will please, perhaps charm you. It is by a clergyman and evidently not a high churchman. I receive so many books from clergymen and find them generally so full of professional platitudes that I rarely look at them, and this must have been lying on my table, unopened, for several weeks. But I took it up by chance and it captivated me. Its title is "Sweet Home," disguised under the refrain of a College hymn, and its subjects are homely; but treatment of them is new as well as true; original though just and in a style full of

grace, abounding with happy illustrations, and sometimes even bright with wit.

It is not a book to read much of at a time; an occasional quarter of an hour at afternoon tea in that beautiful room, where there is your portrait in your Opera Box, and of which I have had the engraving by Robinson in my Dressing room ever since 1838!

I hear that Brights' speech has already produced an epistolary crisis in the Cabinet, and that the approaching meeting of that body is believed to be stormy.

I cannot express to you how grateful to you I am for your kindness in inviting me to Bretby after my Scotch expedition. Besides the ineffable happiness of being under the same roof as yourself, it is a sustaining something to look forward to. It checks that restlessness which is the great obstacle to work, softens solitude and animates one for public life.

Ever dear Lady,

Your grateful and devoted,

D

Don't send back the little book: deign to accept it.

Disraeli's feelings for both ladies had, indeed, already become so warm as to cause him acute irritation if public engagements interfered with plans for enjoying their society:

Hughenden,
November 10th, 1873

Dearest Lady Bradford,

I should certainly have availed myself of your suggestion to visit Weston, if only for a day on my way back, if I had

received it only three days ago; but affairs have changed very much since then. The Glasgow expedition has developed into colossal proportions, and I tremble when I think both of the moral responsibilities and the physical exhaustion of the enterprise. Instead of getting away on the 21st, as I had counted on, I must be there at the least a full week; nothing but banquets, meetings and speeches. They think it will be a greater demonstration than Lancashire two years ago. I hope they may not be disappointed; I have little spirit for the campaign. But the worst, so far as my reaching you, is this. I had intended to have thrown over all my Scotch invitations which I had only accepted provisionally, but I have received a letter from Sir William Maxwell, to whom I was engaged last year, to tell me that he has come over from Vienna purposely to receive me at Keir. And I think he would be deeply mortified if I did not go, were it only for a day. I understand that the William Osbornes assume that my engagement to them of last year holds, and are remaining to receive me. I have not heard anything, but they are old friends whose feelings I should not like to hurt.

You see, therefore, I shall have great difficulty to manage my movements, so that I should be on the 2nd at Ashridge and on the 6th at Sandringham, both engagements I must keep. I look forward to all these journeys with greater dread even than the Scotch demonstrations. . . .

D

The Glasgow expedition stood equally in the way of his acceptance of an invitation from Lady Chesterfield to visit her at Bretby. "My Glasgow *honors*," he wrote on

November 7th, "take place on the 19th and 20th, so I could not have reached Bretby at the earliest before the 21st; therefore I fear my visit must be renounced. I must console myself by the delightful remembrance that you invited me." But he could not willingly forego the pleasure of a visit and he more than hinted at hopes which he harboured for the future—"None of these visits could I avoid; but I have refused every invitation from Scotland and all others here, so after December the 17th, I shall be in this unbroken solitude (i.e. at Hughenden). If by any chance you summon me to Bretby, you know how happy it will make me." And when in due course the hoped-for invitation arrived and it was found to clash with a political reunion, Disraeli hastened to change the date of the latter to a more convenient season:

Hughenden Manor,
December 15th, 1873

Dear Lady Chesterfield,

I returned to Hughenden on Saturday night after an absence of a month—but your agreeable and lively letter, to which you applied an undeserved epithet, had been forwarded to me; but it reached me not a fortnight, but only a week ago. I had only a few days before, when consulted as to a political reunion, fixed "about the third week of January," so I could not reply to you immediately. I wrote again to my intended host suggesting that the end of the month would be more convenient for all purposes, but I have got no answer from him. I dare say he had sent out some invitations and is disembarrassing himself of them if possible. I conclude from his silence that he is carrying

out my second proposal; but I expect to meet him to-morrow at Mr. Gathorne Hardy's in Kent and I will write to you again; I hope, and will believe, to announce that I am to have the pleasure of being your guest at the time you mention.

What with Glasgow, Keir, Lamington, Gunnersbury, Ashridge, Sandringham and Blenheim I have lived in such a whirl during the last month, that I can hardly distinguish the places where I met persons, and attribute the wrong sayings to the wrong folk.

I think the Government has quite relapsed into the miserable condition they were in at the end of the Session, and from which the accession of Mr. Bright and his sham programme had for a moment a little lifted them out. There will be no measures about reform, or land, or education, and I continue of the opinion I expressed when I was at Bretby that they will have to dissolve in March.

You do not say anything about yourself and what you have been doing. Is Lady "A" [4] still with you? And how is she really?

I was agreeably disappointed with Sandringham. It is not commonplace—both wild and stately. I fancied I was paying a visit to some of the Dukes and Princes of the Baltic; a vigorous marine air, stunted fir forests, but sufficiently extensive, the roads and all appurtenances on a great scale, and the splendor of Scandinavian sunsets, etc.

Yours sincerely,

D

---

[4] Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury, universally known in society as Lady A.

Three days later he is able to write from Hemsted Park, the seat of Mr. Gathorne Hardy, to which four other members of the late Tory Government had been summoned to meet him: "I have extricated myself from the Burghley gathering rather by force than adroitness, and shall now obey your summons to Bretby when you give your day." And his last letter of the year determines the latter:

Hughenden Manor,
December 23rd, 1873

Dear Lady Chesterfield,

Your plans quite suit me. At present I am on my way to Trentham.[5] I was prepared for a dark and solitary Christmas, but the Duchess would not hear of it and has taken me captive, so I appear in a few hours in a family party of the enemy. If they spare my life, I shall present myself at Bretby on the 19th. We must pray that dear Selina[6] may join our party, and then it will be complete.

Yours sincerely,

D

We shall make a good fight at Stroud and have a fair chance. Newcastle would I think be impregnable, but it ought to be tried with the Ballot.

Nevertheless, affectionate though his letters to Lady Chesterfield had now become, they still lacked the emotional warmth which characterised his missives to Lady

[5] At that time one of the country seats of the Duke of Sutherland.
[6] Lady Bradford.

Bradford. To the latter lady he addressed himself with increasing frequency and in a strain of growing exuberance. At Keir, the residence of Sir William Maxwell in Scotland, he seizes hold of a pen while still a little intoxicated with the success of the Glasgow expedition and dashes off a letter in his most florid style. Even the formality of the "Dearest Lady Bradford" now disappears:

Keir, Dunblane, N.B.
November 26th, 1873

You were right in supposing that your letter was more precious to me than "loud huzzas."

It has been a great week—without exaggeration. What pleased me, personally, most was the opportunity forced on me, of shattering all the hypocritical trash about my letter to Grey. I call it the Weston Manifesto for it was written under the roof that you inspire and adorn.

I rather long for rest, but have no prospect of it. I live on the railroad and am now going to Cochrane's[7] for a day, for I could not resist his reproachful countenance any more.

This is a most interesting place: full of treasures of art: and a cedar library. Without, the finest landscape in the world, so varied, picturesque and animated: the Carse of Stirling, its castle on a Gibraltar, a glittering river winding through the plain and hills of beautiful undulation.

Yours ever,

D

[7] Lamington in Lanarkshire, the seat of Mr. Baillie Cochrane, afterwards Lord Lamington.

And this is followed by three more letters in quick succession into one of which creeps—though scarcely more than as an aside—a little political news:

Lamington, Lanarkshire
November 27th, 1873

I wrote you a hurried line, almost on the railway, yesterday—having just received your delightful letter.

I am anxious to know how you are.

Direct to Hughenden. It is the safest and the shortest way of reaching

Yours,

D

George Street, Hanover Square,
December 2nd, 1873

Your letter from Hughenden reached me yesterday morning on my return from Gunnersbury, where I had sought refuge from dullness on my arrival from Glasgow. My prophetic mind assured me it would be a mistake to write to Weston and that your spirit was nearer to me than that—so I called in Belgrave Square.

I could hardly hope to see you—even if you had arrived—with all the cares of invalids in the case.

Now I must go to Ashridge.[8] If you could find time to write me one line there to say how Lord Bradford is and all of you, I should be grateful.

Ashridge,
Gt. Berkhampstead.

[8] At that time the property of Lord Brownlow.

I found, as usual, some amusing people at Gunnersbury,[9] among them, Bernal Osborne and Mrs. O. and his daughter, who is to be a Duchess[10] in the course of the month.

I learnt in confidence but from authority, that Ashantee and the Cuban difficulty have engrossed the late Cabinets: that no Parliamentary measure has been discussed or proposed, or mentioned. The Government want to get hold of a popular measure; but that's a slippery thing, and I am assured that Parliamentary Reform will not be touched in any shape.

It seems hard to be in the same city and not meet. I shall return as early as I can on Friday. Is there a chance of your still being in Belgrave Square? On the next, unhappily, I have to go to Sandringham.

Yours,

D

Ashridge, Gt. Berkhampstead,
December 4th, 1873

Your sorrows are my sorrows. Alas! that all I can offer you is sympathy.

If I were not bound by a chain of inextricable engagements, I would come down to Brighton. I shall be in town to-morrow and hope that at least on Saturday I may have a line. On Sunday and Monday it would be—

Sandringham,
King's Lynn.

There is a rather amusing party here; the Sebrights, Lord Pembroke, Harry Bourke, Lady Marian[11] and Lord

[9] The seat of Mr. L. de Rothschild.
[10] Of St. Albans.
[11] Lady Marian Alford, mother of Lady Brownlow.

Verulam and two daughters, and some others whom I don't know—chiefly Comptons I think. A stroll in the woods of Weston were worth it all!

Yours ever,

D

A few days later the blunder of a Commissionaire whom he had instructed to call at her house in Belgrave Square with a book, "with your name inscribed in it," but to forward the gift to Weston if she was not there, provided the excuse for a letter which lack of news might not otherwise have justified; and on December 14th he writes a letter full of schemes for bringing about a meeting:

Hughenden,
December 14th, 1873

Your letter just caught me as I was leaving Blenheim and lightened my heart, as its companions always do.

When I was at Ashridge I accepted an invitation to Crichel for the 5th January from a mesmeric feeling and from some expressions of Gussy[12] that if I would come, they would "try to get people to meet me whom I liked," that there was a chance of our meeting. But since I received your somewhat gloomy letter before you went to Brighton, I have been regretting my rashness and been devising in my mind, how I could escape from my engagement. I have not yet done so—and am now again full of hope. Pray go to Crichel if possible. It would be delightful to be together and so unexpectedly!

On Tuesday I have got to go to a political reunion at

[12] Lady Augusta Sturt, afterwards Lady Alington.

Mr. Hardy's in Kent. It is business and must be done, but it is a sort of thing I abhor. I would rather hold a good council without the paraphernalia of pheasants and the conventional finery of second-rate women.

Montagu[13] is here. He came with me from Blenheim and accompanies me to Hemsted, Mr. Hardy's. I shall have to stay there till Friday morning. Pray write a line to me at Hemsted Park, Staplehurst.

Yours,

D

Lady Bradford duly arranged to be of the party at Crichel, and Disraeli's gratitude found vent in a long conversational letter:

Hemsted Park,
December 17th, 1873

Your delightful letter made me grateful for your obedience. Your view of the Bazaine affair is graphic and quite just. For myself, I should have no objection to pass the days in an isle of oranges and myrtles, but, then, it must be an enchanted isle, illumined ever with the soft effulgence of a crescent moon![14]

There were five members of the late Cabinet here, so I have at least done some business and I think may now escape a gathering at Burghley which was, or rather is, on the tapis, and from which I rather recoil. The lady of

[13] Montagu Corry, afterwards Lord Rowton, Private Secretary to Disraeli.

[14] A reference to Lady Bradford's name, Selina. Marshal Bazaine had been condemned to death on December 10th for surrendering with the whole of his troops at Metz in the Franco-Prussian War. On December 12th his sentence had been commuted to twenty years' imprisonment on the Isle of St. Marguerite.

that house is singularly austere and is a painful contrast to my sweet companion in the bowers of Weston.

Here, besides myself and my host, we had Lord Cairns, Northcote, Hunt and John Manners.

We hear that Lord Burghley is going to be married, but we don't know to whom. Lord Exeter told our informant, and conceive his not asking the name of the lady! What a remarkable instance of sympathy!

Monty is here, which is very convenient to me, and we leave this place in an hour for Hughenden via London; but he leaves me, I am sorry to say, on Monday for Savernake, so I shall pass my Xmas alone. This is, however, not a great grief to me beyond losing his society, as I never was a great admirer of merrie Xmas. Even when a boy I always hated factitious merriment, in the form of unnecessary guzzlement and those awful inventions, round games, worse even than forfeits if that be possible.

All my thoughts are now in Crichel. I hope I may hear from you before we meet there.

You will laugh at my giving my opinion on so imperfect a diagnosis as I possess; but I can't help fancying D.B.'s ailment is only a development of gout. I know a similar case and if it be so it can be perfectly controlled, if not cured.

Yours ever,

D

To these various dispatches Lady Bradford was not always as responsive as Disraeli could have wished; and he became apprehensive lest, after all, she might not carry out her promise to be at Crichel:

Hughenden Manor,
December 28th, 1873

Were it not for Lady Chesterfield I should not know you were alive.

It is nearly three months since I have seen you and a fortnight since you spared me a line. Let me know whether you go to Crichel, as, if you do not, my stay will be counted by hours, not by days. And let me particularly know whether there is a chance, as I am told, of your being at Bretby on the 19th.

I passed my Xmas at Trentham, in the enemy's camp, where I was taken captive; but they treated me with great humanity and spared my life, which was valuable to me as I had a prospect of seeing you. They wished me to remain a week, but I gave them only two days. I do not stay a week except with those I love. The page of human life is quickly read and one does not care to dwell upon it, unless it touches the heart.

Yours ever,

D

Touched by this pathetic appeal Lady Bradford took pity on him and replied at once, stating her intention of being at Crichel, though woman-like she contrived to introduce sentences here and there which filled the recipient "rather with anxiety":

Hughenden Manor,
December 30th, 1873

I must thank you for your great goodness in replying to me by return of post. Knowing the hour at which the 2nd

post arrives at dear Weston, it seemed to me almost physically impossible for you to do so. I was restless and disquieted, and your letter, to a certain degree, brought balm.

I shall stay at Crichel exactly as long as you do. Who our companions may be is a matter of perfect indifference to me; so long as you are present I should rather prefer persons I dislike, as they would not require any attention.

I am anxious to hear all the accumulation you have to tell me and I have a few trifles to tell you. As we are to meet in a few days, I will not dwell on parts of your letter which fill me rather with anxiety. One hour of your confidential causerie will be worth all the letters in the world, and being now full of joy, I will anticipate nothing but happiness.

Yours,

D

CHAPTER II

January–March 1874

A DECISIVE VICTORY

So far as the political situation was concerned the year 1874 dawned full of promise for Disraeli. "Lady Bradford gave me your congratulatory message on the Stroud election," he wrote in a letter to Lady Chesterfield on January 10th; "much the most important event of the kind that has yet occurred." And he added that he agreed with Sir Michael Beach, "a very able and rising man," that after Stroud nothing need astonish them. A fortnight later he had further encouraging news to send her:

Carlton Club,
January 23rd, 1874

Dearest Lady Chesterfield,

Lincolnshire just settled, and I think we shall walk over the course. Lord Melgund, the contemplated Liberal candidate, has written to Harry Chaplin to say that he shall not stand, as whatever political feeling he has is Conservative. A Mr. Boncherett who had advanced as a Conservative and who is, I believe, son-in-law to Sir Montague Cholmeley, retires from the field, and Sir Dugdale Astley comes forward, a most popular and powerful candidate, and no opposition anticipated.

I hope you will make out this scrawl, but the post time is pressing and I write it by candle light. The visit to Bretby was most pleasing to me, though I came down in wretched spirits. But you made everything delightful.

Your affectionate

D

But both Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford had now taken an extraordinary hold upon him, and no political success could banish them from his thoughts. The visit to Crichel was over and left him lonely and depressed. "The separation was sad," he wrote to Lady Bradford on January 11th, "and I travelled as far as Wimborne very melancholy." He had little news to give her beyond mention of the guests whom he found at Heron Court where he was staying, one a clergyman who had emancipated himself, like Lord De la Warr, under the new law. "I looked at him and listened to him and asked myself—'Why'?" And he concluded his letter on the note of melancholy on which he had begun it:

I shall leave this to-morrow early and dine at Hughenden alone; but loneliness is preferable to the presence of those who do not interest you. I have been spoiled the last week, so miss the sympathetic voice and the glance of gentle thoughts. I count on hearing from you whenever you can.

A visit to Bretby was in prospect and that was something, but it was lamentable that Lady Bradford would not be there:

THE FOURTH DUKE OF RUTLAND
GRANDFATHER OF ANNE AND SELINA

From a miniature painted by Philip in 1838

A DECISIVE VICTORY

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
January 18th, 1874

I am going to Bretby to-morrow across country, and it was my original intention to return by the same mode—but now that you are in London, I shall change my plans and shall come up straight to the great city from Bretby, that is to say if I can get a roof for my head. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests," but I—alas! alas!

Even my old hotel which I unwillingly contemplated occupying, cannot let me again have my suite of rooms. I have made an offer for Eleanor of Northumberland's house in Whitehall Gardens. I trust that Edwards, however roughly, may take me for a short time, as I hate changing hotels.

At present, I contemplate reaching town on Friday afternoon and what I want particularly to know is, whether I can call on you on my arrival. I shall stay in town till Monday and then, probably, come up permanently at the end of that week.

I hope Weston did Bradford no harm. Write immediately, as I am restless and disquieted.

Yours ever,

D

A letter from Lady Bradford reached him the day after his arrival at Bretby, but the delight which its receipt afforded him was extinguished by news given him on arrival that she was ill:

Bretby Park,
January 20th, 1874

Your letter this morning was most agreeable to me and gave me some sustaining power, which I require. The prospects of our future meeting and being much together seem very dark.

I arrived here yesterday at tea twilight, and the first sounds I heard were "Selina is ill, and they are going to Bournemouth." This so knocked me up that I could scarcely perform the offices of civility to my delightful hostess and her guests, who loomed in the chamber of ambiguous light in the shapes of Wilton, the Dick Curzons, and your friend, the great General.[1] I ought not to forget Carnarvon, whom I absolutely did not recognise. The Cis Foresters do not arrive until to-day, but your brother is here and Cyril Graham.

I cannot say I much recovered myself the whole evening, thinking only of one subject, but at last I persuaded myself that the Bournemouth affair was not a more substantial business than it was at Crichel and that nothing was really settled.

I must now tell you that I wrote to you from Hughenden on Sunday directed to Belgrave Square. It was an important letter as to my movements and, I fear, may scarcely have reached you, as it was written on the assumption you would return to town on that day. The practical point in it was, that although I had come here across country, in consequence of your being in London I intended to return by the metropolis, where I should arrive on Friday after-

[1] General J. MacDonald, an intimate friend of the Bradfords.

noon and wished to be informed whether I could call on you on my arrival.

The other matters in it are less important. I have not yet received an answer about Duchess Eleanor's house. What do you think of your sister's house in Hill Street? She wants to let it. Would that do for me? They seem to think that Whitehall Gardens has such a strong recommendation in being near the House of Commons. I doubt that Hill Street would secure a walk, which is something. Certainly I might find a substitute if in Whitehall, by walking to the House of Commons via Belgrave Square which would not only secure health, but also happiness which is something also.

To-day's post informs me that I have succeeded in getting rooms at Edwards' Hotel from Friday next, and I shall keep them on till my plans for the season are matured. They are miserable, merely a couple of rooms on the ground floor, but they are a sort of headquarters until I get a house or commit some other folly.

I count, by your date, that it takes only one day to reach Weston; therefore whether you be in that place, which I shall always love, or in town, I feel convinced I shall hear whether you can receive me on Friday or not.

It is some consolation that you are in "my room."

Yours ever,

D

A meeting of the Trustees of the British Museum threatened with some harassing legislation by the Government, caused Disraeli to cut short his visit to Bretby by a day. British Museum and all else, however, were speedily for-

gotten, for on the morning of the day on which he had arranged to meet the Trustees, his servant brought him the *Times* before he was out of bed and from it he learned that Gladstone had advised a dissolution and had already issued a manifesto to the country. "I was quite taken by surprise," he wrote in his account of the matter to Lady Chesterfield; "and you may be sure," he added, "that I did not go to the British Museum, but after carefully studying the Manifesto, instantly commenced a draft of answer, as I felt everything depended on an immediate reply." But his first news of this momentous happening was dispatched to Lady Bradford:

Monday (January 26th, 1874)

Your letter of the 23rd only came to me this morning. I have never reached Hughenden.

The visit to Bretby was successful which I did not think it would be, for I went there much depressed. But your sister was the life and soul of everything and kept me interested and amused from "morn to dewy eve"—i.e. from rambles to the farms and mines to our evening rubber. I am always analysing character, and I arrived at the conclusion that the secret of her charm is the union of grace and energy: a union very rare, but in her case most felicitous.

The great event found me abed on Saturday morning, and I at once saw the critical occasion. It was most fortunate that an accident, and it was only an accident, had called me to town. I saw the necessity of accepting the challenge of Gladstone, which of course he counted on my

not being able to do. But a political manifesto is the most responsible of all undertakings and I had not a human being to share that responsibility. I telegraphed to Knowsley, to Hardy, to Cairns and Northcote, but I only had the advantage of the critical counsel of my Lord Chancellor; but he is a host. The deed, however, was done and you have probably seen it. I am told it gives great satisfaction.

Lord Derby arrived last night, but too late—and Miladi. I dine with them to-day.

I think I have got the house,[2] and shall at length live again like a gentleman. I have been so busy that I have taken it (if it be mine), without seeing it, trusting to Monty who I telegraphed to at St. Giles, and who arrived on Saturday night and has been of great use to me.

Think of me sometimes and write constantly. Your messages were given to me and made me happy.

Yours,

D

In his letter to Lady Chesterfield written on the following day he enclosed a comment on Mr. Gladstone's Manifesto:

I agree with Carnarvon that G's Manifesto is very ill-written, but I do not agree with Carnarvon that it is not in his usual style. I think his usual style the worst I know of any public man—and that it is marvellous how so consummate an orator should, the moment he takes the pen, be so involved and cumbersome and infelicitous in expression.

[2] No. 2, Whitehall Gardens.

Though "Dear Lady Chesterfield" had now become "Dearest Lady Chesterfield," Disraeli found time to write her two letters only between the appearance of Mr. Gladstone's Manifesto on January 24th and his own appointment as Prime Minister on February 20th. To Lady Bradford, on the other hand, he wrote continually, maintaining a running commentary on the progress of the fight whose outcome must have so vital an influence on his own political fortunes. "It is impossible to form any opinion at present of the result of a General Election," he wrote on January 27th. "There has not yet been time to learn the feeling of the country. But I see no signs of enthusiasm on the part of the Liberals and their press is hesitating and dispirited." But whatever the news which he had to communicate to her he thought always of her, urgent to console her when fortune frowned upon her, eager to share her rejoicing when the Fates were kind. Her sons, the then Lord Newport and Colonel Francis Bridgeman, were candidates and Disraeli kept an anxious eye upon their prospects:

Wednesday, January 28th, 1874

Amid all this chaos and confusion my thoughts are with you and yours. I am very anxious about dear Newport —but we hear every day. I am hopeful about Francis . . . .

I think things look well. What sustains me is the enthusiasm among the great constituencies. This was never known before. I shall be disappointed if we do not carry

both seats for Westminster and two for the City. Chelsea even looks promising, and there are absolutely spontaneous fights in Finsbury and Hackney. Nothing like this ever occurred before.

I am making no sacrifice in writing to you. It relieves my heart, and is the most agreeable thing to me next to receiving a letter from you. Yours this morning gave me the greatest pleasure. In the great trials of life it sustains one to feel that you are remembered by those whom you love. I can truly say that amid all this whirl you are never for a moment absent from my thoughts or feelings.

D

And the next day he wrote to remind her that he expected to hear from her often—he hoped daily. "With two sons candidates you certainly ought to write to their chief every day." And he then touched upon his own part in the battle:

On Saturday I am to answer Gladstone. There is such a multitude coming to Aylesbury that we are to adjourn from our hotel dinner to the Corn Exchange which will hold any multitude.

Disraeli returned from the Aylesbury meeting in high spirits:

Hughenden Manor,
February 1st, 1874

Yesterday was a complete success—to my content. And you know that as regards my own doings I am very rarely

content. I think the Malacca Straits[3] will now be pretty well understood by all England and Mr. Gladstone too.

He received that evening news of three seats won and of two doubtful constituencies held:

That looks well, but I will not indulge in hope till I have more information; much must be known which is not known to me, for the telegraph will not work on Sunday. On Wednesday I speak at Newport Pagnell, but shall return to town at the end of the week—if you be there. I found your letter on my arrival which made me happy. I hope to have another by Wednesday morning.

News came of Colonel Bridgeman's defeat and the next two letters are cries of distress and sympathy:

Hughenden Manor,
Thursday, February 5th, 1874

My heart is so full of you and your unhappiness that I should have been silent, had I not received your letter.

Monty and myself returned here last night—at midnight—from Newport Pagnell. You will see and read in the *Times* what took place and their comments thereon.

Monty went off this morning early to the great scene of action, but I declined to accompany him as you were not there. I was depressed last night, especially about Stafford,[4] as I knew it would draw a tear from that eye which

[3] An ephemeral episode which loomed much larger on the hustings than it did in Whitehall.

[4] The constituency for which Colonel Bridgeman stood.

I wish only to be bright, and agitate that heart which I wish to be happy.

This morning I hear from the managing Committee that they now absolutely contemplate obtaining a majority. I think it must greatly depend on this day which was always the critical one. If London and Westminster follow Marylebone, the situation will be grave.

I remain here till I hear of your movements.

Yours,

D

Hughenden Manor,
Friday, February 6th, 1874

Amid 1000 affairs, I write to you one line.

I have written to Lady Ches. I am detained here by my contested election. No danger, but great trouble when I have so much to think of and do, and great vexatious expence for nothing. My last accounts are that we have gained 40 seats, equal to 80 on a division, and have now a majority of 14 over Gladstone. That majority will increase.

Amid all this I continually think of you and of your grief, and should like to wipe the tears from your eyes, for I feel they flow.

Bear up! Francis is young, and if we prosper he will soon have his way.

I think of going up to town on Monday; but on Tuesday or Wednesday I must be at Buckingham and speak. This is horrid.

Write by return, or telegraph, when you will be in town.

Yours ever,

D

On February 8th when the fate of the Liberal party was already sealed, Disraeli wrote saying that he thought that Gladstone would nevertheless meet Parliament—"if only not to imitate me." The gains in the country had been remarkable, ninety-two more than Peel had been able to claim in 1841, and more than Gladstone himself had been able to boast of in 1868. Disraeli was happy—"I am very well, but sigh for moonlight. I think I could live and love in that light for ever." But his forecast of Mr. Gladstone's probable procedure proved wrong as he hastened to inform Lady Bradford a few days later:

Thursday, February 12th, 1874

I am most disappointed in not hearing from you to-day. I do not know for certain what day you will be in town and if in town to-morrow, if I can see you.

I hear from high authority that the crisis is at hand and that G's colleagues will not support him in his first idea of meeting Parliament.

The Faery will be here on the 17th.

We shall have 50 majority—the strongest Government since Pitt. We have gained more than Peel did in 1841.

Baillie Cochrane saved by 9!!! Lord Shaftesbury canvassing for his son, and giving lectures and preaching in the island! Perthshire won by 500! I quite despaired of it, as Sir W. S. Maxwell wrote in such a despondent tone.

I am greatly vexed by not hearing from you to-day.

D

At this juncture the Faery had matters of the utmost importance to discuss with Mr. Disraeli and sent General

Ponsonby to summon him to her presence. Hence Disraeli had news of the greatest interest for Lady Bradford, and he lost no time in despatching it, marking his letter a quarter to seven o'clock on February 17th. Oddly enough this was one of the very few occasions on which he referred to his Sovereign in a letter to Lady Bradford as "the Queen":

General Ponsonby who brought me a letter from the Queen has just left me. I go down to Windsor to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock. I have seen Lord Salisbury who joins the Government.

The business of forming an Administration proved a laborious one:

Windsor Castle,
February 18th, 1874

It is doubtful whether I shall see you to-day, for a tremendous pressure awaits me when I get back to town which I think may be about half past 4 or 5; but I hope to try in the evening.

What you suggested in your note of this morning occurred to me some days ago—but the difficulties are immense, as you will see when we meet. Yet they will, I trust, be overcome; for I am influenced in this matter by a stronger feeling even than ambition.

D

That the difficulties in question were successfully overcome, is apparent from a letter written to Lady Chesterfield three days later:

Whitehall Gardens,
February 21st, 1874

Dearest Lady Chesterfield,

Yesterday I kissed hands, and to-day I take down Carnarvon [5] to Windsor and make him a Secretary of State, which I hope will please you.

Bradford is Master of the Horse, and Selina will ride in Royal carriages, head the line even in the entrée and gallop over all Her Majesty's lieges. I see a difference already in her demeanour.

I did receive your letter directed here, but on that Monday had previously called in Hill Street on my way from the station and found you had gone. This greatly mortified me; indeed I have never quite recovered from it and almost doubt whether I shall ever again subscribe myself

Your devoted

D

So great was the pressure of work in connection with the formation of the Government that the greatly harassed Prime Minister found time to write only one hurried note to either lady during the ensuing week, and that one he was unable to finish. It conveyed to Lady Bradford on February 25th the names of some of those who were to fill the Court and other offices outside the Cabinet, including the appointment of the Duke of Abercorn to the Irish Viceroyalty; and it concluded with a reference to a letter which excited Disraeli's extreme astonishment:

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[5] Lady Chesterfield's son-in-law.

Very private. A most extraordinary letter from the future chief of the Foresters, enclosed in one of the General's. Such a production in the 19th century absolutely inconceivable! Mind I show it to you. I cannot finish this letter.

With the completion of his Government, however, he found time to write at greater length and in a letter to Lady Bradford on February 27th, he wrote of the strain to which he had been subjected and of the effect of all his worries upon his health:

2 Whitehall Gardens
February 27th, 1874

What with the drawing-room yesterday and a crowd of interviews afterwards in Downing Street and endless letters, I could not find time to write the only lines which really interested me—to her who is rarely absent from my thoughts and never from my heart.

It has been an awful affair altogether; but it is now done and on Monday next there will be a Council at Windsor, when we shall appoint Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and swear in and sanction all the remaining members of the Government. The Queen did not settle about the Chamberlainship till midnight on Wednesday. I had retired when her box arrived, but was roused at 6 o'clock a.m. with the news of the capture of Coomassie which I sent on to H.M. immediately with three dashes under the word "important" on the label. She had been very low the night before about the first news.

The Government is a very strong Government and gives much satisfaction. I have contrived in the minor and work-

ing places to include every "representative" man, that is to say every one who might be troublesome. Clare Read and Sir Massey Lopes have enchanted the farmers, and I have placed Selwin Ibbotson, Jem Lowther, Cavendish-Bentinck and all those sort of men, who would have made a Tory cave. There are some terrible disappointments; but I have written soothing letters which on the whole have not been without success.

I am not very well. I rather broke down yesterday, having had some warnings; but I can keep quiet now till Monday. My personal servant is Mr. Baun, if ever you want to communicate with him; but I hope there will be no occasion now, or hereafter.

Montagu is with me as much as he can, but between dead and living sisters not as much as I could wish. Since you left town I have never dined out. There is plenty to occupy me in the evening, for my table is covered with Despatch boxes all of which must be attended to. In ordinary affairs these can be managed, even with a House of Commons; but there is nothing so exhausting as the management of men—my present life—except perhaps the management of women—and I make little progress at night.

I shall always consider it most unfortunate, I would almost say unkind, that you quitted town at this conjuncture—the greatest of my life. I do not think I could have deserted you—but I will only say—Adieu!

Yours

D

The urgency of rest and change of scene took Disraeli to Brighton. But could circumstances have proved more exasperating? No sooner had he left London than a Puckish

fate hurried the sisters to the capital. "Your dear letter of to-day a.m. has just reached me," he wrote to Lady Bradford from Brighton on March 8th. "How very unlucky I should have left town; but for the first time in this great affair, I felt dead beat." But matters might be mended. "There is a Treasury Board of Installation to-morrow at one; it will not take 10 minutes. My brougham will be in waiting and carry me then to the house I love best in the world." Meetings were contrived with each lady in turn; but their days in London were numbered and the delight of a visit to them on March 13th was tempered by Disraeli's knowledge of their projected departure the following day:

10 Downing Street,
March 14th, 1874

Dearest Lady Ches.,

The matchless sisters, as I always call them, were never so delightful as yesterday afternoon; but then the bitter drop would rise even in the honied cup when I remembered it was the farewell visit. I think it was too cruel both to depart on the same day!

It is a very good thing that I have the sternness of public life to sustain me, for I am sure I should fall into melancholy otherwise. What a talisman is the thought of Easter! Of all the kind things you have done that is the kindest!

The Duc d'Aumale is now announced. He leaves England to-night, but wished to shake me by the hand. I like him very much, but not as much as I like somebody else.

I am hers,

D

His letter to Lady Bradford was as usual couched in still more extravagant terms:

10 Downing Street,
March 13th, 1874

The most fascinating of women was never more delightful than this afternoon. I could have sate for ever, watching every movement that was grace and listening to her sparkling words. But alas! the horrid thought ever and anon came over me—"It is a farewell visit." It seemed too cruel! I might have truly said:

"Pleased to the last, I cropped the flowery food,
And kissed the hand just raised to shed my blood."

Constant separations! Will they never cease? If anything could make me love your delightful sister more than I do, it is her plans for Easter which realise a dream.

I am certain there is no greater misfortune than to have a heart that will not grow old. It requires all the sternness of public life to sustain one. If we have to govern a great country, we ought not to be distrait and feel the restlessness of love. Such things should be the appanage of the youthful heroes I have so often painted. But alas! I always drew from my own experience, and were I to write again tomorrow, I fear I should be able to do justice to the most agitating, though the most amiable weakness of humanity.

D

The stress of business still left little time for letter-writing; but Disraeli made the best use of such opportunities as occurred:

A DECISIVE VICTORY

To Lady Chesterfield

Whitehall Gardens,
March 16th, 1874

I was interrupted while writing to you, late yesterday, by the unexpected call of the Duc d'Aumale, and when he had gone it was too late even for our privilege post. You had, however, a rough line.

As among my privileges I can write and send letters on Sunday, I send you a few words to make up for my hurried lines of yesterday. I do it that you may be a little and unexpectedly amused on Monday morning, which Lord Lyndhurst used to say in the country was Black Monday: no letters and no newspapers—at least not in his time.

Next to Lord Orford, the Duc d'Aumale is my greatest (I dedicated "Lothair" to him) friend. I do not know his equal. Such natural ability, such extreme accomplishment and so truly princely a mind and bearing. Between the Comte de Chambord and the Comte de Paris, he has been "sat upon" in life and has had no opportunity. He looks extremely well, and says he is—"though," he added with much melancholy, "I am now alone in the world."

It is said that he is rarely alone and passes his time—his life—amid the *demi-monde* of Paris. People abuse him for this and say it is very wicked, but though I do not myself follow those courses, I can always sympathise with the lonely and can pardon every expedient by which a very clever man strives to escape from his solitary self.

As for myself, I feel restless and disquieted since you and Lady Bradford left London. There is no greater misfortune for a man than to have a heart which never grows old.

That is my sad lot. Some think it has its compensations; I do not see them, unless it be, perhaps, that it impels me to write to you these lines and to tell you, what I fear I have told you too often, that I am

Your affectionate

D

CHAPTER III

March–April 1874

"THE REALITY OF POWER"

On March 17th the Prime Minister was summoned to Windsor on business which augured "a long audience." Nevertheless he found time to write two letters to Lady Bradford in the course of the day. He could not, indeed, keep silent, for he had received a letter which seemed to him to call for an immediate answer:

10 Downing Street,
March 17th, 1874

I sent you a hurried line this morning as I thought it my only opportunity of writing, and I did not wish you to think I was silent because I was "tetchy." I have just come back from Windsor and I send you this, because I think it may prevent misapprehension.

Your view of correspondence, apparently, is that it should be confined to facts and not admit feelings. Mine is the reverse and I could as soon keep a journal, which I never could do, as maintain a correspondence of that kind. The other day, you said it was wonderful that I could write to you with all the work and care I have to encounter. It is because my feelings impel me to write to you. It was my

duty and my delight: the duty of my heart and the delight of my life.

I do not think I was very unreasonable. I have never asked anything from you but your society. When I have that I am content, which I may well be for its delight is ineffable. When we were separated, the loneliness of my life found some relief in what might have been a too fond idolatry. The menace of perpetual estrangement seemed a severe punishment for what might have been a weakness, but scarcely an unpardonable one. However, you shall have no cause to inflict it. I awake from a dream of baffled sympathy and pour forth my feelings, however precious, like water from a golden goblet on the sand.

D

Was this the sort of reply that Lady Bradford expected or desired? It was scarcely the apologium of a penitent. She temporised. Why should he not call on Lady Newport who was just then in occupation of her house in London? Disraeli grasped eagerly at this straw:

I called in Belgrave Square on Tuesday evening as you suggested. I was never more dispirited and disinclined for Society, for I thought all was over between us; but I wished to show you, even then, that there was no bitterness in my heart but deep grief. To my surprise I was refused entrance; but I would not take an easy denial and until a gentleman in scarlet came to my brougham door and assured me that Lady Newport had left town, I could not be persuaded that the dear little ortolan had really fled.

Here, then, was little enough to allay the anxiety which he felt. Yet would he not give up hope, and he proceeded to tread upon less delicate ground:

I had a very hard day yesterday. A great personage, a favorite of yours and mine,[1] was with me all the morning at this house with difficult and delicate affairs; then, without luncheon, I had to run to Downing Street to keep my appointment with the mover and seconder of the Address, each of whom I had to see separately; then a long Cabinet and then the banquets! Mine was most successful and I believe also Derby's. Everybody said they never saw a more brilliant table there. I gave Gunter carte blanche, and he deserved it. He had a new service of plate. Baroness Rothschild sent me six large baskets of English strawberries, 200 head of gigantic Parisian asperges, and the largest and finest Strasburg foie gras that ever was seen. All agreed that the change of nationality had not deprived Alsace of its skill.

Anxiety was not, however, to be banished and Disraeli turned again to the matter that was uppermost in his mind:

I thought very often at dinner how much I should like to give a certain person a banquet in this room, which is a fine room built, I believe, by Sir Christopher Wren, and then I thought, perhaps I shall never see her again, or worse than never seeing her, meeting with alienated glance.

[1] The Prince of Wales.

Yet relief was near at hand:

But when I went home which was late for me, for I was obliged to go to Lady Derby's, I found a letter which took a load off my heart, and I pressed it often to my lips.

And with the shadows lifted Disraeli turned with renewed zest to planning further meetings:

Do you begin to see your way about Easter? Your darling sister has asked me for the 30th; but business is in such a backward state that the House of Commons must sit in Passion Week, if it be only for two days. I think, however, if the House assists me and is good-natured, I might adjourn it from Tuesday night to Monday the 13th. At least this is my present plan and calculation. I wrote to the Master of the Horse some days ago and asked him to do me the honor of passing the Whitsuntide holidays at Hughenden. I was gratified and a little surprised that he quite embraced the idea, but said that he could not settle without consulting you. I wonder if you will come? . . . I hope you may make out this letter written quicker than one of "our own correspondents" in the midst of a battle. A thousand blessings to you.[2]

Disraeli's delight at the completeness of the reconciliation at once displayed itself in a renewed and irrepressible buoyancy. Unmindful of the cause of the recent estrangement, he allowed his pen free rein—"Your dear note reached me

[2] Letter dated March 19th, 1874.

this morning amid many cares and difficulties," he wrote on March 20th, "but they vanish immediately that I hear from you and feel that your heart is true. It lightens all my labors. . . . I wrote to you yesterday. It could hardly have reached you when you indited me your much-loved lines"; and again on March 22nd—"Of all the charming things you ever did, none was happier than your directing your letter of yesterday to Hughenden. It gladdened my heart this morning the moment I awoke, and I feel the flush of joy now." And he made elaborate plans for following up his letters with a meeting:

I shall keep my brougham at the House to-morrow on the chance—rather a wild one—of my being able to run up for half an hour about 6 o'clock to see you, if only for a few minutes—delightful; but this may be impossible. And then about coming to you after the Gloucester House banquet—I remember you once told me that you kept country hours. It would hardly do to find my excellent colleague, the Master of the Horse, gaping, if I called on you at half past ten, and you perhaps—even your beautiful eyes might be slightly veiled. If I don't contrive to see you before dinner to-morrow, try to send me a line to say whether I can venture to come from Gloucester House. If not, and indeed if I do, I will ask leave to call upon you at one on Tuesday.

But relief left him free also to write discursively on matters of more general interest. On March 19th he had taken his seat on re-election to the House of Commons after his

appointment as Prime Minister, being introduced by Lady Bradford's brother, General Cis Forester, M.P. (who on the death of his brother George in the following autumn became Lord Forester), and Mr. Henley:

The General performed his part well yesterday and looked quite himself. His eye blazed with the true Forester fire. Things went off very quietly in the House. Gladstone made a queer dispiriting speech and in short told his party that the country had decided against them and that they were thoroughly beaten. To-night we are promised warmer work as the Home Rulers are to have their fling. Taylor's return was very good.

And on March 22nd, he gave her further news of the doings of the new House of Commons:

On Friday night two of my new young Ministers, one very young, greatly distinguished themselves. Sir M. Beach on Home Rule spoke admirably, with physical and intellectual strength, commanded the respect of the House and quite won the liking of the wild Irish who had been most prejudiced against him. But the great coup of the night was Georgie Hamilton who introduced our India Bill. He spoke under great disadvantages at eleven o'clock in a House somewhat wearied by the previous debate; but he realised my warmest hopes and anticipations. His aplomb was perfect; his voice melodious; his manner dignified without pomposity and very graceful. Nothing could be more clear than his narrative; and considering that a month ago he may have heard of Bengal, but certainly not of Behar, it was

really marvellous with what picturesque lucidity he described the northern and southern provinces of the Ganges. He obtained universal applause and seemed as much appreciated by those opposite as by his friends. This is a triumph for me.

Church questions presented difficulties and not least of them the Public Worship Regulation Bill:

At twelve to-day the Archbishop comes. There falls to me the hardest nut to crack that ever was the lot of a Minister. A headstrong step and it is not only Ministries that would be broken up but political parties altogether, even the Anglican Church itself. I have no one really to consult with. I can listen to my colleagues, and all they say is worth attention; but they are all prejudiced one way or the other. I often wish we were wandering in the woods at Weston and that I could try my conclusions on your bright intelligence. I have the greatest confidence in the clear intellect of a faithful female friend.[3]

Disraeli was now counting the hours before he could adjourn the House and hurry for the brief Easter recess to Bretby. But business poured in during the last few days of March. Coomassie had been captured and the Ashantee expedition brought to a successful issue by Sir Garnet Wolseley; and the General had to be rewarded and the troops thanked:

[3] Letter to Lady Bradford dated March 26th, 1874.

Whitehall,
March 24th, 1874

Dearest Lady Chesterfield,

After the Cabinet on Saturday, I was obliged to drop down to much-neglected Hughenden where my presence was required; so I had no Sunday post, as my privilege can only be exercised in London.

Yesterday was a galloping day. Though in town by the earliest train, there seemed an awful arrear during my Sabbatical retirement. I had to see Sir Garnet Wolseley at one and find out what he expected, or wished, as a reward —not a very easy or pleasing task. It often happens in such cases that Governments put themselves much out of the way to devise fitting recognition of merit, and then find they have decided on exactly the very thing which was not wanted.

Then I had a great deputation in Downing Street at half past 2 o'clock; then the House of Commons at half past four and then, keeping my brougham ready, I managed to steal away to Belgrave Square at half past 6, and see somebody I love as much as I do yourself.

Then I had to get home to dress for one of the great Wedding banquets; at Gloucester House—all the Royalties there: Marlborough House, Clarence House, and Kensington Palace and a host of Abercorns, Ailesburys, Baths, Barringtons, etc. etc., not forgetting the hero of the hour, Sir Garnet again. He is a little man, but with a good presence and a bright blue eye, holds his head well and has an upright figure. He is only 40; so has a great career before him.

This is why I could not write to you yesterday.

I infer from your dear letter this morning, that you rather

expect me on the 1st April. Coming to you in Passion week it seems to me there may be a chance of my visit being longer than it ought. I must trust to your sweet frankness, which I always admire, to tell me when I ought to go. Don't think me coarse, or rude, in saying this. The fact is, I am not quite so independent a person as when I visited dear Bretby before. I am obliged to make my arrangements with the Postmaster-General for the daily service of my Despatch boxes and other rather complicated arrangements of a similar kind . . .

I am very well; although the work is unceasing, and it seems a dream. I told *somebody* that I was well because I was happy, and she said, "Of course you are, because you have got all you wished."

But I assure you, as I assured her, it is not that. I am happy in your friendship and your sister's. They are the charm and consolation of a life that would otherwise be lonely. You are always something to think about; something that soothes and enlivens amid vexations and care.

I am writing to you this morning, lest I should miss another day before I could tell you I was

Your affectionate

D

How greatly Disraeli desired to do justice to the gallant General and his troops is clear from two letters which he found time to write to Lady Bradford:

Whitehall,
Saturday, March 28th, 1874

I could not get away from the House, where they kept me till past 7, and I am overwhelmed with affairs this

morning, with a Cabinet at *two* o'clock. Therefore I must reconcile myself to the sadness of not seeing you before your departure.

I have got to move the vote of thanks to the troops on Monday; and the mass of papers I have to read before I can fulfil this task with propriety, is terrible. I counted on Monday morning, but I am obliged to attend the Committee of Privileges that day at 11 o'clock on the arrest of the absurd Mr. Whalley,[4] and instead of having that morning for preparation, I shall have to leave the Committee at four o'clock to speak in the House of Commons!

So, if I am remiss in writing, it is not from forgetfulness of the person to whom I wish to write. I have no facts to tell her now and anything else, I know, is out of fashion in this material age.

D

Whitehall,
March 29th, 1874

Your little note with its magic signature came just in time to sustain me in my heavy business—and when I tell you I have got to receive here two Archbishops at the same time, you will not doubt my orthodoxy, though even Prelates in this day are sometimes heretical. Sir Garnet Wolseley has been with me an hour, explaining the campaign, which I am to introduce to the House of Commons to-morrow. He is a most intelligent man; a complete soldier; from his youth a man of war; and winning from his modesty. I could tell you a great deal about him, but my

[4] A member of the House of Commons who was arrested and fined for contempt of court in connection with the famous Tichborne case.

eyes are misty with work and I am writing this in twilight.

I wrote a few lines before he came to the Master of the Horse, to remind him of his kind engagement to spend Whitsun at Hughenden. Now that the day for celebrating H.M.'s birthday is settled I could tell him that I expect to have the honor of receiving him and yourself, if you pleased, on Monday the 25th, to stay till Saturday the 30th, when we must all come up to town together for our birthday dinners. Lady Ches. seems low from the suspicion that the Master of the Horse meditated paying her a very short visit. Is there no hope for her?

D

Release came at last, and on March 31st he wrote to both ladies in an exuberant vein:

10 Downing Street,
March 31st, 1874

Dearest Lady Chesterfield,

I have just adjourned the House of Commons for a fortnight. I begin to feel the reality of power.

I can hardly believe that by this time to-morrow I shall be at Bretby! dear Bretby, where I have had so many agreeable and happy hours and which I quitted last on the very eve of the "great revolution." I long to see the farm again and the room full of cheeses.

I had, to-day, a visit from Prince Leopold [5] who struck me as rather a clever person, and cultivated. He is of age in a week.

[5] The youngest son of Queen Victoria, created Duke of Albany in 1881.

I saw the General in the House of Commons this afternoon, and he said they were not coming down till Saturday and asked me if I should remain as long? I blushed to think how long I hoped to remain.

Your affectionate

D

In his letter to Lady Bradford his enthusiasm is tempered somewhat by doubts as to Lord Bradford's intentions with regard to the Whitsuntide recess. Lord Bradford was a keen supporter of the Turf who was later to have the satisfaction of leading in the winner of the Derby when, in 1892 his horse, Sir Hugo, won that coveted race, and it was natural, therefore, that Lady Bradford should desire to devote some of her time to her husband's favourite pastime:

10 Downing Street,
March 31st, 1874

I shall be at Bretby to-morrow (D.V.) before 5 o'clock or about. I can hardly believe that I have adjourned the House of Commons to-day for a fortnight. Power begins to seem a reality.

I wrote to Lord Bradford on Sunday, telling him that I had prevented the Queen's birthday being celebrated in the midst of the Whitsun holidays, and reminding him of his promise to pass his Whitsun at Hughenden. I mentioned that I expected that pleasure on Monday the 25th May, and to stay till Saturday the 30th, when we could all return to town together for our Birthday banquets.

His answer was very kind, but as dear Lady Ches. says, rather suspicious. While he confirms his promise, he says that Lady Bradford can't well come on Monday and does not speak very firmly of Tuesday—and then he gives the reason why Lady Bradford can't come on Monday, which are all racing reasons!

All this is rather discouraging.

I am writing to you with persons constantly coming into my room and asking for instructions. This is why what I write is so uncouth, probably illiterate.

I spoke last night quite to my own satisfaction, which I rarely do, but did not produce any great effect on the House which expected something of a more inflammatory kind in all probability. I gave them something Attic. Your friend the *Times* again assailed me, which I disregard and should not notice if you did not. I send two Radical papers, not because they praise me—but because I think their observations show fine taste and due appreciation.

I can hardly believe that this time to-morrow I shall have your blessed and beloved society!

D

Disraeli spent ten days at Bretby, deeply touched, as always, by the affectionate thoughtfulness of his hostess. "We play whist every evening," he wrote, "and I have never once revoked! More than that, Lady Ches. says I play a really good game." And on departure he left a note expressive of his gratitude:

Bretby Park,
April 11th, 1874

He cannot quit a roof where he has passed so many happy hours without offering to the dear and bright-minded companion of his rambles and his pastimes, his affectionate gratitude for the kindness which has charmed his life and which will soften the pang of separation by its consoling memory.

D

For
The Countess of Chesterfield.

Yet even over the brightness of Bretby there had fallen one dark shadow. Lady Bradford had not been there. Moreover she maintained a puzzling silence:

Bretby Park,
Tuesday, April 7th, 1874

It seems to me so unnatural that we should not write to each other, that I break a silence which seems to me an age, and although I have neither "facts" nor "feelings" to communicate.

You said to me when we parted that you would send me a line—it never came, and only most mortifying news from C. Brom;[6] and a word from you might have softened the pang of disappointment.

Monty has gone, which increases my work. The messenger now comes every day besides an active post, but by working early and late I have been a great deal in the air with a fascinating companion, who talks to me of the only

[6] Castle Bromwich near Birmingham, one of Lord Bradford's residences.

subject which really interests me, and who, by the most delicate and graceful kindness, unceasingly endeavors to console me for the loss of one she loves almost as well as I do myself.

D

A reply to this letter gave him some comfort—"I was very glad to see your handwriting again; it seems an age since you deigned to write to me." Lady Bradford, it seemed, was indisposed at Castle Bromwich; and Disraeli planned travelling from Bretby to see her—"I propose to pay you a visit to-morrow . . . I calculate I can leave Burton a little before eleven and find myself at Castle Bromwich about noon." If the visit was actually paid Disraeli derived little satisfaction from it, as is clear from a hurried an exasperated note written on April 10th:

Bretby Park,
April 10th, 1874

Pray don't write any more letters. I began working at 7 o'clock this morning, in order that I might have half an hour of your divine society—

And here I am desolate.

D

Library.

April 11th saw the Prime Minister back in Downing Street, and the same evening he wrote to Lady Bradford and to Lady Chesterfield. "I arrived here by half past three," he told the former, "and have been transacting busi-

ness unceasingly to this moment which I seize because I am anxious, and more than anxious, about your state—fearful indeed. I entreat you, therefore, to let me know by return how you really are—the exact truth." To Lady Chesterfield he wrote of the work which he found awaiting him:

10 Downing Street,
7 o'clock, April 11th, 1874

It will not, I am sure, displease you to hear that your friend has arrived safely at his post, and has been very busy transacting business since half past 3 o'clock. All is well: my only colleague in town, I expect, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; but he wanted much to see me. He is in high spirits.

My boxes employed me the whole journey, being very full, especially that from the Lord Chancellor. It contained papers on both the great questions we sometimes talked about, but he had the prescience to send his paper about the princely dignities direct to the Queen "by my desire." This saved a couple of days and I have no doubt Her Majesty is much pleased.

I found a box from Her which arrived this afternoon from Osborne, and she thanks me for "two most interesting letters," and so the little pique has passed and she no longer grudges me my visit to dear Bretby.

I confess myself I feel very much like a boy who has returned to school, and who sighs for his happy holiday and his charming playfellow!

There is a telegram just arrived which I suppose you will see in the newspapers to-morrow, that the King of

Ashantee has signed the treaty. This is what I predicted and, therefore, I feel a little proud.

Try to remember me and believe me always,

Your affectionate

D

Reassuring news concerning Lady Bradford's health lifted a load from his mind. "I received your charming letter this morning," he wrote on the 13th, "and it gave me the utmost pleasure. To hear you are not worse for moving was something; and I will, under your influence, be sanguine as to the future." He added an entertaining piece of news about the German Chancellor. "Bismarck continues improving, having got all he wanted. He is, however, placed on a strict diet, only five dishes, and he misses not one—pickled salmon, smoked herrings, oysters, caviare and potato salad. If he adheres strictly to this for a time he will soon be allowed regular dinners and his favorite beverages—alternate glasses of ale and champagne!"

Lady Bradford had broken what had seemed to Disraeli to be an ominous silence, and he was consequently happy again:

Whitehall Gardens,
April 16th, 1874

Your letter was most interesting to me and I thank you much for it. It was full of thought and, I trust, not devoid of feeling. As you say, "a year ago"! There is magic in time. There was a question you asked in the antique

pleasaunce—"How came it all to happen?" And then somebody came up and so there was no answer.[7] The question often occurs to me in stately councils; it would rather become the softness of summer woods.

On Monday, after a truce of five years, the gout attacked my left hand, and severely. I have borne up against it as well as I could but after a very long and exhausting Cabinet yesterday, I was obliged, at the last moment, to send an excuse to the Speaker with whom I was to dine. How I am to manage to be in the House to-day for the Budget, I am sure I know not; but it must be done.

Everything goes well; the Faery, from whom I hear daily, perfect; and on Saturday, if I be not in bed, I am to receive here the two Archbishops, Canterbury and York. The plot thickens, but I think I shall steer the ship safely.

As if I had not enough on my hands, or rather my only hand, two Household Marquesses, Hertford and Exeter, have got up an incomprehensible quarrel. I have sent for your old and great friend, Jem,[8] to help me, and at half past two to-day, he will be buried in correspondence which it will require all his clear sense and knowledge of the world, to comprehend and manage.

When I say that everything goes well, I mean on the surface and to the world. In reality my personal sufferings are great; but they are nothing to the anguish I feel when I think of you. I thought you treated the accident with too much levity at first, and told you so at Castle B.[9]

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[7] This refers, apparently, to Disraeli's first visit to Weston; but it was six months, not a year ago.

[8] General MacDonald.

[9] The horses drawing the carriage in which Lady Bradford had been going to a Court, had bolted; and Lady Bradford had been bruised and badly shaken.

Though I write with a hand yet free, it is weak from sympathy and other causes, therefor I close abruptly a stupid letter.

D

George Russell has resigned.

Whitehall Gardens,
April 18th, 1874

Your delightful letter did me a great deal of good this morning. When I shut my eyes I fancied you were speaking. It was so natural and like yourself. Your last line about yourself was reassuring, though I am fretful and haunted with anxiety about it. But I am inclined this morn to hope. My own bulletin is good. I have seen my left hand for the first time for a week, and though not exactly fit for a Lord Chamberlain it would do for a morganatic marriage.

The Budget is very successful and I am quite pleased that it pleases you; and the Master of the Horse too.

I have refused every invitation to dinner which I have received since my return to town, and their name is Legion, and this on the wild chance that on one of the selected days we might have the opportunity of being together. If among all one only is realised, I shall be quite, not satisfied, but repaid. If I can, I must go to the Salisbury banquet to-day; but I will not decide till five o'clock.

I was in the House last night till midnight, and only left because I was assured there would be no more divisions. There was one, however, and Mr. Secretary Cross talked, I see, of the Prime Minister's absence on account

of the state of his health!! What language! This comes of giving high office to a middle-class man. I have not yet seen the *Edinburgh Review,* but I am told there is a passage on this matter in it that is very funny.

Yours,

D

Whitehall Gardens,
April 19th, 1874

I wrote to you yesterday early and hurried, and missed many things. I am anxious to hear a little more definitely about the dear knee. I don't grudge Willey[10] a day, but I can't help fearing this constant movement for you.

There is no fear that I shall be quite well on the 26th, for I am nearly quite well now. I had a note from the General yesterday, informing me that all was right and that you were to be his guest next Sunday.

It won't do for me to go down to Brighton, or give up the dinners I have accepted; or they would make out I was very ill and all that. I have refused every invitation that has arrived since I returned to town. I mean to fashion and frame my life into two divisions—the public life, which speaks for itself; and the inner or social life, which so far as I can arrange, shall be confined to the society of those I love and those who love them. Life, at least so much of it as may remain to me, is far too valuable to waste its fragrance on the desert air. I live for Power and the affections, and one may enjoy both without being bored and wearied with all the dull demands of conventional intercourse. Faithful to this determination, though truly in

[10] The Shropshire home of the Foresters.

a very little instance, I acted on your hint and have asked Maria[11] to Hughenden.

Yesterday was one of those cumbrous banquets which bother and which, in my present condition, was oppressive. French Ambassadors and Dukes and Duchesses of Marlboro' and Cleveland, and all that. It did me no harm, however, for I was resolved and firm, asked for Seltzer water, did not pretend to drink wine or to eat. I had the honor to sit by the great lady of the mansion, so long and so recently my bitter foe. She feasted me with, sometimes skilful, adulation. If I were not really indifferent to it, which I think I am, I certainly appeared to be so yesterday; for with the depression of my complaint and the want of all artificial stimulus, I felt I was singularly dull and flat. I could scarcely beat up the battledore; the shuttlecock, indeed, frequently fell. I am told by another great lady that all this homage is sincere. It is the expression of "gratitude"; not so much for the offices I have showered on them, as for the delicate manner in which I spare them the sense of "humiliation"!

Yours,

D

I am now going to call in Lowndes Square.[12]

Whitehall Gardens,
April 20th, 1874

I hope you will find me on Wednesday pretty bonnie. I should be quite well if I were less anxious about yourself. I see you, in my mind's eye, sailing through the crowd at

[11] Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury.
[12] On Lord Bradford's son, the then Lord Newport.

the drawing-room like a swan, and when I contemplate the possibility of your "hobbling," to use your own phrase, it tears my heart.

Let me know exactly when I may call on Wednesday. There will be nothing in the morning sitting of the House of Commons to detain me. The only terror is a Cabinet, and that one will hardly know till the last minute.

Just as I was going to call at Lowndes Square yesterday, Brunow[13] arrived and stayed with me more than an hour. I never knew him more *fin* and witty, particularly in his remarks on our common friend, Bismarck; for he introduced Bismarck to me years ago. Brunow does not think that Bis has "the divine faculty of patience." "You cannot judge how a man will conduct himself in difficulties, when life has been a course of unbroken prosperity." And so on, delightful sneers and delicious surmises. All this in too low a tone, and varied with occasional references to his wife and bursts of hysteria.

When he took leave I wanted to attend him downstairs, but he would not, and at the first step, I not near, stumbled, fell down and lay helpless on his back. I ran to him, calling for a servant, and between us, raised him. No bones were broken and I hope no serious bruise. I got him back to the drawing-room and suggested a glass of sherry. He approved of the idea amazingly and was by no means content with one. I thought I was going to have another hour, but at last he went away, and I was so fortunate as to find the dear little ortolan[14] at home and alone. She pleased me very much; another character and another scene

[13] The Russian Ambassador.

[14] Lady Bradford's daughter-in-law, the then Lady Newport, now the Countess Dowager of Bradford.

for that social inward life that I am constructing for the remainder of my days.

The house is quite fresh and very pretty; with many evidences of art and a love for it. She is to come and drink tea with me some day; perhaps you will bring her.

I have given the St. Patrick to Lord Londonderry, the son of a grande dame who was kind to me when a youth, though she was a tyrant in her way. But one remembers only the good in the departed. Remember me cordially to Lord Forester. He was my earliest supporter, and never changed or faultered.

Yours,

D

CHAPTER IV

April–May 1874

THE GOVERNMENT GETS TO WORK

When in a recent letter to Lady Chesterfield Disraeli had said that all went well, he did not mean to suggest, of course, that the political situation at home and abroad presented no difficulties calling for solution. This was, in fact, very far from being the case. At home the rivalry between the Ritualists and the Anti-Ritualists provided him, as he had remarked in a letter to Lady Bradford, with as hard a nut to crack as ever fell to a Minister's lot; while abroad, quite apart from the internal instability of France, trouble was brewing as a result of the action of M. de Lesseps in altering the basis on which tonnage dues were charged on ships passing through the Suez Canal, in defiance of the decision of an International Commission and of the wrath of the British Admiralty. M. de Lesseps was, in fact, giving Disraeli a good deal to think about.

To Lady Bradford

Whitehall,
April 25th, 1874

I should like to have seen you to-day for a little quarter of an hour before the Cabinet; but I feel such a wish is in-

human and exigeant, and I repress it. Having a strong will and thinking only of two things—power and something else—my acquaintance, I know, must be an embarrassing one. I yield to my fate, though it leaves me hipped and dispirited.

I enclose you the Claremont letter[1] of last night, which may interest you a little. As we shall not be alone together for a week, you can return it to me, and also with a line telling me exactly how you are and if the improvement continues.

M. de Lesseps bothers me a little. I had eight telegrams from different parts of the world about the Suez Canal. If he persists, it will be a revolution as great as the deluge.

D

But Disraeli's vulnerable spot was not his head; and later the same day he was writing in high spirits as the result of an invitation to call at Belgrave Square:

Whitehall Gardens,
April 25th, 1874

I will call to-morrow between 3 and 4. It is not Lesseps or Archbishops that can agitate me. Nothing that disturbs my head can do that.

I have quite thrown off my enemy and feel particularly well.

Last night was most amusing. Gladstone, stagey, overdone, and full of false feeling and false taste—trying to assume the position of Scipio Africanus, accused by a coun-

[1] A letter from Queen Victoria.

try which he had saved. But between Smollett and Whalley, it was provincial Hamlet between Clown and Pantaloon.

Yours,

D

To Lady Chesterfield he wrote three or four times a week giving her the substance of what he wrote to Lady Bradford. In his letter to her on April 28th he amplified what he had said about M. de Lesseps:

Your dear letter has just reached me and made me happy, as your letters always do. I should have written to you to-day even if I had not received it; but instead of writing to you at any length, I must send you this hurried note, for my Royal Mistress has summoned me to Windsor where she arrived last evening from Claremont, complaining very much of the heat of the weather . . .

The last Baronet, Kelk, was made to please the Queen. He was the builder of the Albert Memorial, and refused to receive any remuneration for his work. He is immensely rich, was in Parliament, and is a Tory.

The Lesseps affair excited but did not agitate me. It is only when the heart is concerned that I am disturbed. The Lesseps business was a great triumph for me, for I was the only person who judged he would give in and said so in Parliament. I knew my man. When the notices were served on our Government some oily papers—Carnarvon's *Spectator* for example—said it was obviously occasioned by the indiscreet remarks of the Prime Minister. I wonder what they will say next week.

I must run away and have hardly room to say how much I love you.

D

Though four days only elapsed before he wrote again, the time seemed long to him:

To Lady Chesterfield

Whitehall Gardens,
May 2nd, 1874

It is a long time, at least it seems so, since I wrote to Bretby—but the days have been dull and busy and the cold easterly wind blights every impulse of the heart. Selina came back on Thursday looking very well and, I think, having enjoyed her visit. I am going to dine in Belgrave Square to-morrow, which will be a great pleasure; but she talks of running away again immediately. Her movements perplex me; they are as mysterious as a highwayman's.

My visit to Windsor, though on troublesome affairs, was very satisfactory because our Gracious Mistress has confidence in her advisers, and under these circumstances difficulties soon vanish. She goes to Balmoral on the 18th and has given her commands to John Manners to be Minister in attendance for ten days from the 25th May. This he does not like at all, especially as to report himself at Balmoral on the 25th he must travel on Sunday, which is perilous in Scotland; and probably he may be tied to the stake by a Calvinistic congregation before he reaches the Palace.

There was no other Minister who could be spared, for Malmesbury is too infirm to travel. The five Secretaries

of State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the First Lord of the Admiralty and, of course, the Lord Chancellor and myself, cannot be spared from Parliament; but the Queen was graciously pleased to say in her letter this morning that "all Her Ministers were agreeable to Her."

To balance this Court favor, the Ministers were beaten last night by the Home Rulers in the House of Commons. It was a snap Division when everybody was away, but rather disgusting.

Yours ever,

D

On May 2nd, he had important news of happenings on the Continent, which he communicated in a hurried note to Lady Bradford:

I shall take my chance of finding you at home to-day about three or a little before, as I suppose I may call not having called yesterday . . . From a telegram this moment received I fancy Serrano is now in Bilbao. So end again the Carlist hopes. Affairs in France are very bad and the Assembly is going to meet again without any arrangement being come to between the Ministry and the Legitimists and others. A *coup d'état* is looked upon as inevitable; but I don't see who is to make it. All this is between you and

D

The probability of Lady Bradford curtailing her stay in London was responsible for the tinge of acidity which marked the opening words of his letter to her the next day:

Whitehall Gardens,
Sunday, May 3rd, 1874

Considering I have only seen you twice, and for very short time, since your return, and that you are on the eve of another and as it seems to me, indefinitely long absence, is it unreasonable that I should wish to call on you this morning? But I will not do so if you think it better that I should not; I will not even murmur, because I know you are always right.

It is very true that I shall have the happiness of meeting you this evening, which is great. To see you in society is a pleasure peculiar to itself; but different from that of seeing you alone. Both are enchanting, like moonlight and sunshine.

I got to Burlington [2] yesterday at six o'clock and had half an hour before dinner. I asked immediately about your heroine and an expert, in the shape of N. Rothschild, immediately introduced me to her, in all her forms. I was fascinated; and doubly pleased that I owed the pleasure to you. He told me that the original was a hunchbacked flower girl!

Yesterday was not so wearisome as usual, it was not so long; and I got away in time to make my bow at the Speaker's levee, where I was in rather long arrears of respect.

I spoke pretty well.[3] You know my horror of after-dinner orations, talking about nothing; the most difficult of all enterprises.

Yours,

D

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[2] The Academy.
[3] At the Academy Banquet.

Happy though Disraeli habitually was in his relations with Queen Victoria, there were, now and then, occasions on which he found himself at variance with her. She had intended leaving London; but events of importance were impending and Disraeli thought it desirable that she should remain. "My head is on my shoulders," he told Lady Chesterfield on May 5th, "and the Great Lady has postponed her departure till that of the Emperor! She had refused everybody and I had scarcely a hope yesterday when we talked about it, of success. I fear when I stand before Her at the drawing-room to-day, I shall have an awful frown." Later in the day when the drawing-room was over, he wrote to Lady Bradford:

House of Commons,
May 5th, 1874

My head is still on my shoulders—the Great Lady has absolutely postponed her departure! Everybody had failed, even the Prince of Wales; but she averted her head from me—at least I fancied so—at the drawing-room to-day, and I have no doubt I am not in favor. I can't help it. Salisbury says I have saved an Afghan war, and Derby compliments me on my unrivalled triumph.

In the meantime, if I triumph at Courts, I have trouble enow in Parliaments. Here all is peril and confusion. Again an Irish Bill the cause, and our precious Irish friends all going to vote against the Government! It is intolerable.

I have ordered my brougham at a quarter to eight, but I fear the odds are heavy against my dining in Lowndes Square.

An enormous drawing-room to-day. The Queen retired at a quarter past four—and then I escaped—but am thinking of my House of Commons difficulties the whole time.

Your last letter was a darling letter and makes me feel doubly your absence. I do not know, or care to know, whether you are my equal or my superior. I know that your society charms me. A sweet simplicity, blended with high breeding; an intellect not over-drilled, but lively, acute and picturesque; a seraphic temper and a disposition infinitely sympathetic—these are some of the charms that make you beloved by

D

As it happened the reception arranged for the distinguished visitor from St. Petersburg was marred not by any mismanagement but by pure mishap; for on May 13th, Disraeli wrote to Lady Bradford:

I have just received a telegram that the Emperor of Russia accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh have got aground last night coming out of Flushing, and can't be got off for twelve hours or so; that is to say till eleven o'clock to-day. All the great preparations *manquée!* At the best they may reach Dover by five o'clock to-day instead of Gravesend where are all Bradford's golden carriages.

Nevertheless Disraeli, if he had annoyed the Queen by his importunity, had been forgiven—"My audience to-day," he told Lady Chesterfield on the same date, "which was long, was all milk and honey."

Before this, however, there were skirmishes of some importance in the House of Commons to write about:

To Lady Bradford

House of Commons,
May 6th, 1874

Yesterday was a very interesting day here. About 8 o'clock having made every conceivable arrangement to meet the Irish difficulty, which would not occur till late at night, and being pretty sure of at least 250 English members on whom I could depend, I thought I might fly to Lowndes Square, where I stayed till a quarter to ten and passed my time most agreeably; a quintette of our host and hostess, dear Lady Ches., Claud Hamilton and myself. Nothing could be more agreeable, though I felt now and then as the Duke of Wellington must have done at the famous ball at Brussels.

I was back at the House a few minutes before ten and found a crowded and agitated scene. The Opposition had made a secret whip, long planned, on an Education question which came on before the Irish, and censuring the first act of our Government in that department. They had made their terms with the Home Rulers who were ready to support them to a man.

This prevented the Irish Debate, which was our weakness, coming on, and when the division was called our rebellious Irishmen of course voted with us, in addition to the Legions I had prepared. So in the first great party division of the Session we had a majority of 63, which may be looked upon as our working majority; and I have no doubt on a critical occasion, with due notice, we shall be able to command a majority of 80.

LORD BRADFORD'S COACH AS MASTER OF THE HORSE

From a painting at Weston

Our Newmarket men behaved badly, all the Gerards and Harry Chaplins and Co. away without pairs! This is not the way to be made peers. Sir W. Jenner has been with me to-day from the Queen; I have great difficulties. She says, however, she knows it was not my fault and spoke of you, as she always does, with great affection. I will try, when the House is up at 6 o'clock, to go and see the dear in Hill St. and stay half an hour.

I wrote to you yesterday. Perhaps I may hear from my beloved to-morrow. I am always thinking of her and am grateful to her for the happiness which she sheds over my life.

D

Claud Hamilton is most grateful for the offer. It is to be kept secret for some days, that he should be able to secure his seat—and perhaps the lady.[4] This happy idea to offer it to him, was yours.

To Lady Chesterfield

Whitehall Gardens,
May 8th, 1874

Yesterday was a day of disappointments, I could not leave my seat from half past 4 to half past 1. We had no division, our forces having assembled in overwhelming strength. Their Motion of censure was negatived without their daring to divide.

Will you be at home at 3 o'clock to-day?

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[4] A reference, perhaps, to the beautiful Miss Chandos Pole, whom he subsequently married. Lord Claud Hamilton was M.P. for King's Lynn at the time; but it is not clear what the offer was to which Disraeli here refers.

If you cannot send me an answer now, I will take my chance then. It is my only one.

Yours,

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 12th, 1874

We were late at the House last night and I have risen late and have 1000 things pressing; among others, the Duke of Marlboro' who has sent two letters to me this morning and won't be put off even by a visit to Windsor; and yet I must write to you, for it seems a long time since that has happened.

No "feelings—only facts"—except to say what inexpressible pleasure it gave me to see you yesterday, from silly reasons perhaps; you will laugh at them—they will keep. No answer to my telegram! Cruel lady of Bretby! While I was working at some Despatches last night in my room at the House of Commons, Monty knocked and came in triumph with a telegram. He knew the one that had been sent, for it had been despatched through my wire at Downing Street. His countenance was radiant with my anticipated pleasure. Alas! it was from the Mayor of Norwich! I fell in a clear heaven like a bird shot in full wing.

Last evening, at the House of Commons, arrived the most interesting and confidential box that the Faery ever transmitted to me. I would have given much that you should have seen it—but I must take it back this morning myself. It was the *reply* from St. Petersburg to the previous critical correspondence of which I gave you some faint idea.

Lady Wilton has asked me for 31st and I have, of course, accepted—with delight. Now I must stop—and I almost doubt whether you will be able to read this hurried scrawl —but it will ease my heart on my journey that I have sent it.

Wednesday morning will be a critical debate and I shall probably have to make my first speech of the Session. Extension of the Household Franchise to Counties. The House was very full last night; both sides did their utmost, but the foe would not fight.

To Lady Chesterfield

Whitehall Gardens,
May 14th, 1874

We had a capital division yesterday on a capital subject—the extension of the Household Franchise to Counties.

There were rumors that the Liberal party was to be reorganised on this "platform," and amazing whips were made by both sides. The result surprised both. Lord Hartington, Lord George Cavendish, Mr. Cowper Temple, Col. Kingscote and other Whigs left the House without voting; and Mr. Lowe actually voted with us! There were five hundred and more in the House during the debate, and we had a purely Conservative majority, with the exception of Mr. Lowe, of 114!

Now I am going to Windsor where I hope I shall see Selina.

I am anxious about your voice, etc. You should have telegraphed to-day.

D

His next two letters to Lady Bradford were of a more personal nature:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 15th, 1874

I am writing to our darling at Bretby in good spirits after your charming note, which was worthy of Queen Titania. I shall tell our dearest friend something of last night,[5] which was both splendid and agreeable, and of one who without exception, in my opinion, was the peerless matron of the scene.

I think we ought to commemorate your good news at 5 o'clock in Whitehall Gardens, and drink to her convalescence in a cup of wondrous tea, given to me by a Baronet, made so in consequence. Sheer corruption! And perhaps, if you approve, you will send the enclosed to the dear little lady, who bears the name you once adorned.[6]

D

I shall call at 10 minutes past 6, precisely, but this is not to embarrass you. It is an engagement on my part only.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 16th, 1874

I had a very good letter this morning from the dear "recluse"; cheery and sanguine, though I don't like her having a cough. I hope you won't forget me this afternoon, and that Lady Mabel[7] will be well enough to come. A ball sometimes cures an influenza, particularly if it be the first

[5] The banquet at Windsor in honour of the Tsar.

[6] Lady Bradford's daughter-in-law, the then Lady Newport, now the Countess Dowager of Bradford.

[7] Lady Mabel Bridgeman, afterwards Lady Mabel Kenyon-Slaney.

ball. I have got some beaux for her; Mr. Chaplin, Rosebery, etc. We shan't be more than a large half-dozen and only Dorothy[8] among the womankind.

I have a Cabinet at two to-day, and I fear a heavy one. It will make your delightful presence still more refreshing. In addition to my great Church troubles, I have got a Bishopric to fill!

It made me quite happy to see you last night, though I felt I bored you. I did not like to see you walking alone, but I refrained from being your attendant, though I think I might have hovered over you till you had discovered your lost fawn.

D

True to his word he wrote Lady Chesterfield an account of the banquet in honour of the Tsar at Windsor; and on the following day described his own audience with the royal visitor:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 15th, 1874

Dearest Lady Chesterfield,

I am most anxious—almost unhappy about you. I don't expect you to write, but should be grateful for a telegram to say something about yourself. I fear this dreadful wind and that rash journey;—when you so cruelly left all that love you in the world.

Yesterday was the great festival at Windsor, and really not unworthy of the Crown of England. St. George's Hall was a truly grand scene and could not be easily surpassed—at least I have never seen it equalled—though I have

[8] Lady Dorothy Nevill.

dined in the great days of France, in the gallery of Diana.

Dear Selina was radiant and, I think with confidence, was the peerless matron of the scene. She was in a high place, opposite the Queen, and I think interested and amused in the evening—though a cloud came over her bright brow when we talked of you. She said if she did not hear better accounts she should go down to Bretby.

I presented the hero of the hour, Sir Garnet Wolseley, to her—and afterwards, by Lord B's request, to Lord Bradford. They seemed to be pleased with him.

The Emperor is high bred, dignified but soft in his manners, not that *ton de garrison* which offends me sometimes in the Russian Princes; particularly the Czarevitsch and the Grand Duke Constantine.

I only arrived from Windsor to-day at noon. At 3 o'clock, I am to have an audience of the Emperor at Buckingham Palace. I dine at Marlborough House to meet him and I close with a ball at Stafford House in his honor!

And at half past four I must be at the House of Commons! It is difficult to get through such a day and I have to change my dress as often as an actor; but I would write this line to you if only to say at this moment how anxious I am to hear you are better, and how much I love you.

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 16th, 1874

Dear Darling Recluse!

Your letter of this morning relieved my heart. I approve of everything except your cough and your going out with a cough in an easterly wind.

I wrote to you yesterday on my arrival from Windsor. At three o'clock the Emperor held a levee of the Diplomatic Body and our Ministry at Buckingham Palace. Then I had an audience which was an audience rather of phrases, but nothing but friendship to England and hopes that my Government would cherish and confirm those feelings. His mien and manners are gracious and grateful, but the expression of his countenance, which I now could very closely examine, is sad. Whether it is satiety, or the loneliness of despotism, or the fear of violent death, I know not; but it was a visage of, I should think, habitual mournfulness.

Then I had to get to the House of Commons by half past 4—and then an Imperial Banquet at Marlborough House; very fine and nothing but Russian music all dinner. I sate between Duke of Wellington and Lord Hertford, so it was not necessary to talk much.

At 11 o'clock, the Emperor having previously retired and smoked, the whole party adjourned to Stafford House where there was a ball—our host and hostess, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, having previously been guests at the dinner. Selina was there with Lady Mabel. I saw her very little: it was a mob and the responsible eye of a chaperon is always wandering after the missing fawn.

I rose very late and am writing this at half past one with a Cabinet at two, and having had nothing to eat to-day but bread and Bretby butter for which I give you 1000 thanks—so you must pardon this scrawl with a bad pen which does not help me. I have told you nothing.

Yours,

D

There was a good deal happening on the Continent to focus the attention of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, while reverberations of dissensions in the Church at home were stirred by the resignation of a bishop. All these troubles Disraeli confided to Lady Bradford:

10 Downing Street,
May 18th, 1874

Lyon's private letter this morning was interesting as to the state and prospect of parties, but there were no facts to send you. My own feeling is that there will be a patch-up for the moment; the same party in power without De Broglie or the Duc de Cazes, the leading brains. Broglie was personally highly unpopular from his unsympathetic manners; an arrogant doctrinaire. I knew him as a boy, as Prince Anatole; he was always a pedant.

I do not know De Cazes—but, judging from his conduct of business and Lyon's Despatches, I should say he was a man of sense and of the world—with no French excitement. I should say a great loss, at this time especially, when it requires a happy blending of good sense and good breeding to baffle, with dignity, the systematic insults of Bismarck.

The King of Greece has got out of his immediate difficulties by doubling his Parliament. The private letter of Layard from Madrid is most gloomy. You may expect anything in that quarter. Great dudgeon is felt at Lambeth Palace by the Archbishop not having been invited to the Windsor Banquet. The omission of the Premier Peer of England seems inexplicable. I fear not an accident, though the Lord Chamberlain ought to have spoken to me when he observed the omission.

My Bishop who has resigned is Thirlwall, Bishop of St. David's; the greatest intellect on the bench—but 80. Though a Whig, he would not resign to Gladstone, in order to prevent a High Church Bishop. It is a difficult appointment to fill, for he should be not only a man of intellectual reach and learning, but should be acquainted with Welch. Gladstone made a poor Welch parson Bishop of St. Asaph; but the experiment quite failed. He cannot rule his clergy, having no knowledge of the world and no acquirements of note, except his Celtic jargon. I have long foreseen this vacancy and have a man in my eye whose appointment, I think, will do me credit.

Monty dined last night at Madame Bischoffscheim's "gorgeous banquet." She lamented to him that she had invited me to give any day I liked after Whitsun to dine with her and I had declined. If she had asked me to meet a certain person, the cares and calls of State would have vanished; but nothing, willingly, will ever induce me to enter society, unless there is a chance of at least seeing that person.

This is sent only in the hope that it may give her a moment's distraction, if not pleasure. I cannot conceive she could be so imprudent as to go to Teckshire [9] on such a day! If only a single line telling me how she felt came to me this morning, it would cheer my heart amid my toils.

D

And on May 19th in spite of late sittings in the House of Commons and a great press of work, he found time to write long letters to both ladies, describing events in the

[9] The reference is to a party given by the Duke and Duchess of Teck at White Lodge.

House the night before. "There was to be a great attack on our finance and supplementary estimates," he told Lady Bradford; and he laid stress upon the successful outcome—"It was an important night, and has, perhaps, shortened the Session ten days." His letter to Lady Chesterfield was in even greater detail:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 19th, 1874

Dearest Lady Ches.,

Your dear letter this morning was delightful and though I have a host of appointments I must, somehow, or other, find a moment to thank you for it.

The House was late last night, which often happens now, and I, consequently, rise later, so with all the business of the nation and the necessity of being in my place again at half past four, I have less chance of writing to you and seeing Selina, which are my two most delightful occupations in life.

I dined at Belgrave Square on Sunday and sate next to her, a round table and a few agreeable guests; the Knightleys and the Cochranes. It would have been perfect only I saw that Selina was suffering the whole time—the commencement of that influenza which has raged in her household and which I feared, when you left town, was going to prostrate you; but you seem marvellously to have recovered. I could not see Selina yesterday and am fearful I may not to-day; and I have not yet had any bulletin to my enquiry of this morning.

To-morrow, too, I shall not see her; for I have to go to Windsor to receive the parting benison of my Royal Mis-

tress who departs for Balmoral in the evening. Prince Arthur is to be made Duke of Connaught and Stratherne and Earl of Sussex; but you must not mention this at present.

We had a capital night—last night—in the House of Commons, and I think shortened the Session ten days. We have got almost all our money.

Last night was critical. Gladstone reappeared with all his Marshals, Lowe, and Childers, and Goschen, and others of the gang. They were to make an attack on our supplementary Estimates for the Navy. But a traitor had apprised me of their purpose and my benches were full to overflowing. They dared not attack the master of a 100 legions and they took refuge in a feeble reconnaissance by Childers, who was snuffed out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Elections continue to go well for the Ministry, which shows that the Conservative reaction was not a momentary feeling. It is said that both members for the City of Durham will be unseated and the members, at least one, of North Durham County; and that my protégé, Sir George Elliott, will be restored to Parliament, with his new Baronetcy, his millions and his energy. Dorington was very much cheered when he took his seat, and I hear we shall also win Poole.

Adieu! my delightful friend, and always remember with kindness,

Your affectionate

D

I will certainly try to write to you on Thursday and shall direct to you at—

Willey Park,
Broseley.

An invitation to dinner from Lady Bradford on the eve of her departure for Willey, the Shropshire seat of her brother, Lord Forester, met with a characteristic reply:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 21st, 1874

It is with inexpressible pleasure that I find I can have the honor of dining with yourself and Lord Bradford to-day.

D

Lady Bradford left London on the 22nd; but Disraeli was detained in town for another twenty-four hours before he could escape to Hughenden for the Whitsuntide recess, and "though pressed to the last degree," found time to write two letters to Lady Bradford and one to Lady Chesterfield. There was some truth in his observation to the former that if his letters to Queen Victoria and the two sisters during the past few months were collected, they would make as much as three volumes of "Lothair".

10 Downing Street,
May 22nd, 1874

Dearest Lady Bradford,

I sent you Lord Lyons' telegram this morning, but you had just departed. News rather of a negative interest, informing us that the French Ministry had not been appointed; but at this critical moment, I thought it might interest you. The newspapers in this would rather have misled you.

I rose late to-day and, perhaps after all, my chief reason in sending you the telegram was, without troubling you with a letter, to show that you were in my thoughts. The tele-

gram was brought back, and I was told you had departed, which made me feel the depth of my loneliness.

I thought your dinner and your reception were alike brilliant last night and most agreeable. My companion pleased me very much and I doubt not will develop into an attractive woman. I told her I once wrote a book, which was named after her.[10] I would not, however, dwell on the subject. Authors should no more talk of their books than parents of their children. I am, however, in the habit of telling you everything, which I hope you may never find a wearisome one; so I must notice a very remarkable conversation I had with the Grand Duchess, on the Foreign Office night, about "Lothair."

I am wrong in styling it a conversation; it was rather a critical review of that celebrated production, by Imperial lips; but it was keen and original.

The Duke of Beaufort called on me to-day by appointment (made under your roof). What he wanted is, I believe, not very difficult to grant and I should be glad, after all that has passed, to meet his reasonable wishes. He was most friendly, even warm, in personal feeling. He is going to dine with me on the 30th.

I wish you could find out for me, without exciting attention, the real state of Lord Hill's health.[11]

Your figure haunts me peering over the balustrade and watching your guests descending the staircase with—at least on my part—unwilling steps. It seems to me that I had never witnessed such grace and lightness; a peerless matron!

D

[10] The book was *Sybil,* and the companion, Lady Sibell Lumley.

[11] Lord Hill, a distinguished General and Commander-in-Chief, whose home was in Shropshire. He died the following year.

House of Commons,
May 23rd, 1874

I am off in an hour, but must try to send you a line, though pressed to the last degree.

The House sate for a short time yesterday and I dined at home. The Court gone and Parliament gone—and something to me more precious than Courts and Parliaments—I confess I felt somewhat low. There seemed a collapse, after much and delightful excitement.

Monty, however, dined with me which was something, though he went off to his routs and balls at 10 o'clock.

Just before he went, there came a most perplexing, but most agreeable telegram from Balmoral, giving me a great deal of trouble; but in so feminine a manner that it was delightful. I must say that I feel fortunate in having a female Sovereign. I owe everything to woman; and if in the sunset of life I have still a young heart, it is due to that influence.

I wrote a very long letter to Balmoral which made the evening less gloomy, and so roused me that I attacked my Despatch boxes, from which I had previously shrunk, with effect, so I leave no arrears.

I shall have messengers daily and more than daily, so it will be only one post to you wherever you may be—provided you apprise me of your movements. I wrote to our dear on Thursday—to Willey. I fear I shall not be able to send her a line to-day. Unless I hear to the contrary, I shall direct to you at Willey.

If my letters during the last few months to my three fair correspondents were collected, they would make as much as three volumes of "Lothair."

The wind is changed, and I hope all the rain will be exhausted before Hughenden is honored by the presence of those I love most in the world.

D

France was within an ace of a *coup d'état* yesterday. The army will not stand the present thing any more.[12]

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[12] The Ministry in which Duc de Broglie had been a prominent member, had been defeated on the electoral law and had resigned on May 16th. Since M. Goulard failed in his attempt to form a Ministry, the President on May 22nd reappointed the former Ministry without Duc de Broglie, under the nominal leadership of General de Cissey.

CHAPTER V

May–June 1874

AN EMOTIONAL TEMPERAMENT

Disraeli found the country at Hughenden delightful—thorns and chestnuts and lilacs and acacias all in bloom and the air still and balmy. "I can scarcely believe that dear Selina will be here to-morrow," he wrote on May 25th. "It is quite a dream and I am as restless as if I were as young as the Spring." And to Lady Bradford herself he wrote:

I was woke by a telegram this morning announcing that the Princess Alice on the Queen's birthday, i.e. yesterday, had a little girl. This will please the Faery who has domestic superstitions. I can hardly believe that to-morrow we may—I will not say shall—meet, and at Hughenden!

His accounts of the visit were brief. "I find it difficult to look after my friends and to govern the country," he explained to Lady Chesterfield, "so you must excuse these short notes." But he mentioned one detail of interest. "Lady A.[1] has paid a visit to my bedroom to-day to see your portrait which has been hanging up there since we

[1] Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury.

met first at Wycombe Abbey."[2] And it is clear from such hurried accounts as he wrote, that these halcyon days passed all too quickly. Affairs of State could not be brushed aside, and on May 30th the party returned to London, the Prime Minister unfortunately with an embarrassing cold.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 31st, 1874

Dearest Lady Ches.,

We all came up yesterday together—two compartments in an early train, 10 o'clock. This saved that pang which attends the breaking up of a pleasant party.

Selina seemed much better the last day, and her cough greatly modified. I, on the contrary, entirely left my voice at Hughenden and could only speak in a whisper. It came on quite suddenly. I telegraphed for my medico and employed six hours and more, which should have been given to the State, in ceaseless remedies which cured nothing.

I had to preside at a banquet of nearly fifty persons with H.R.H. on my right hand, and had to speak in a whisper. However, to-day, though the rumors at all the receptions were that I was quite done up, I am very much better, so much better that I shall order my brougham and call on Selina and ask her whether I should dine with the Wiltons or not. I hope she may decide in the affirmative. . . .

June 2nd was a day of fierce emotional stress, brought on by an impetuous note written early in the morning to Lady Bradford:

[2] The residence of the Earl of Carrington, afterwards Marquess of Lincolnshire. The first meeting must have taken place sometime before the year 1835.

It seems to me that everybody has written to me, even the Faery, except the only person from whom even a single line would have been precious . . . I am not very well and have some trouble—some affairs and obliged to call a Council at 12 o'clock to-day. There are circumstances under which a word of sympathy is sustaining.

Since Lady Bradford had travelled up from Hughenden to London with him only three days before, she may well have resented the imputation of indifference. And it is probable that something of the irritation which she felt found its way into her reply. Its effect upon Disraeli was disastrous:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 2nd, 1874

Your letter shakes me to the centre and I cannot trust myself to write on it. To see you, or, at least, to hear from you every day, is absolutely necessary to my existence; or, rather, if these conditions were wanting, there would be a change in the order of my life which would astonish the world.

I will call, if it be the last time, after the Cabinet—as your letter seems to say I may. Not to luncheon, for the lady who will be your companion is no great friend to me—but, perhaps, about three you may spare ten minutes to a very unhappy person.

The storm blew by as suddenly as it had arisen and his next letter—the third in the course of a single day—was couched in very different terms:

GROUP AT HUGHENDEN, WHITSUNTIDE, 1874

Earl of Beaconsfield, Earl of Pembroke, Earl of Wharncliffe, Countess of Bradford, Countess of Wharncliffe, Earl of Bradford, Lord Rowton.

House of Commons,
June 2nd, 1874

We have a rather ticklish question on here in an hour's time, and which greatly engaged us this morning. It is connected with that "Irish Education" which has embarrassed so many Ministries. It shall not us.

After our conversation this morning I feel superior to all difficulties, whereas, when I entered your room, I could have welcomed discomfiture. Do not think me unreasonable, if I ask whether I may call to-morrow. If you say *no,* I will yield with a sigh but without a murmur. Only it happens to be the only day in the year which is entirely at my command,[3] and it seems hard that I should not see you in some portion of it. I could call in the evening if I might. But I press nothing. We parted so suddenly that I could not mention this.

I mean to rise early to-morrow and go to Christie's. If the Barber pictures are as rare and wondrous as I hear, it shall go hard if the nation does not possess them. I always remember with delight that in 1867-8, on my own responsibility, I bought for the nation the Blacas collection of gems—£50,000!

If I could give our Gallery some pictures of equal quality, one would not have lived in vain.

Yours ever,

D

Disraeli spent Derby day—his "only real holiday during the Parliamentary session"—quietly in London. "I de-

[3] Derby day, on which the House of Commons did not sit.

clined visiting the course with Harry Chaplin," he told Lady Chesterfield, "and instead of that lunched with Selina, who was delightful. Monty Corry," he added as an item of news, "has won the Derby lottery at Pratts—£175." The next morning he was busy with his plans for purchasing the Barber pictures of which he had written in his letter to Lady Bradford of June 2nd:

To Lady Bradford

June 4th, 1874

I have been closeted the whole morning with Mr. Burton, the Director of the National Gallery, concocting my plans for Saturday's sale. I believe it will end in the House of Commons repudiating my purchase and I shall have to appeal to Rothschild, Lord Bradford and some other great friends, to take the treasures off my hands and relieve me by a raffle from my æsthetical embarrassments. We must be very silent till Saturday, as I don't want any one to know the Government is a purchaser.

But the day had more important matters still in store, for the Public Worship Regulation Bill—"the hardest nut to crack that ever was the lot of a Minister"—was passing through Committee in the House of Lords and the Licensing Bill was being debated in the House of Commons—"The Faery writes to say that she will be pleased if I could report to her the proceedings of both Houses to-night," he told Lady Bradford. "I am her loyal subject and yours." Matters went in accordance with his highest hopes:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 5th, 1874

The proceedings of yesterday in the House of Lords were the most important in the history of the present Government. You saw, then, the result of all my anxious deliberations with the Archbishops for the last three months and more; of my long counsels with Lord Cairns; and of the anxious discussions of many Cabinets. Nothing could be more triumphant; the Archbishops deferring entirely to the Ministry; and Lord Salisbury heartily supporting the masterly and commanding exposition of the Lord Chancellor. Every arrangement was brought about and every calculation succeeded.

You were in the secret which even the Faery was not, though I shall now tell her all; but the admirable sang-froid with which our amendments were divided between Lord Shaftesbury and the Bishop of Peterboro' must have been amusing to you. I think the whole affair in conception and execution one of the most successful, as it certainly is one of the most important, events in modern political history. I don't think Bismarck really could have done better; and I believe the Church will be immensely strengthened; notwithstanding, Beauchamp will probably resign and I fear our friend Bath is furious. I fear, too, we are doomed not to meet at Longleat.[4]

I cannot give a good account of myself. I was well yesterday and in good spirits, considering I had not had the solace of seeing you; I looked after affairs in both Houses, guiding the Licensing Bill in the Commons through some quicksands, and frequently visited the Lords, conferring

[4] The country residence of Lord Bath.

with Duke of Richmond, Bishops of Peterboro' and Winchester, Lord Derby and Beauchamp during the crisis. The latter came to me twice while under the throne to assure me the Lord Chancellor had ruined everything, and when I mildly mentioned that Lord Salisbury approved, he said, "the High Church thought nothing of Lord Salisbury"—But as Derby said, "if Beauchamp disapproves. we must be right."

Our House sate till two o'clock and it was critical to the last, so I could not leave my place. And then I had to write to the Faery on the proceedings of both Houses, as I had promised her. I did it in my room in the House of Commons but when I rose from my seat, I found the enemy had attacked my left foot. I was obliged to send a policeman over half our quarter of the town to find me a cab—and here I am, with the Duke of Manchester, Lord Fitzwalter, and Andrew Montagu, with three different appointments between 12 and 2, and the absolute necessity of being in the House of Commons at half past 4.

Mr. Baum is out trying to buy me a new shoe,—my medico was with me by half past 10. It is most vexatious —I dare say I shall never see you again. I think Bradford, if I am shut up, might call on me to give me some social news and prove that I am not quite deserted by the family. "Gussie" [5] was not at home and I did call on "Susan"; [6] so our wits leapt together. I did more; I called on "Marian" [7] who I understood had said, that though I called on somebody every day (which alas! is not true), I never

[5] Lady Augusta Sturt, afterwards Lady Alington.
[6] Lady Wharncliffe.
[7] Lady M. Alford.

called on her. She was not at home. "Susan" was, in her luxurious villa.

I hope you are well and had a delightful opera, and will have a delicious ride. If Bradford could only win the Oaks, I could bear my own sorrows in the enjoyment and happiness of my friends.

Yours ever,

D

A most incoherent letter, but that is part of the disorder.

But these exertions brought on illness, and with illness came depression—"I have been, and am, very busy," he told Lady Chesterfield on June 6th, "and am not particularly well. And I have not seen Selina for three days which always dispirits me." And at half past six on the same date he wrote to Lady Bradford—" . . . We have had unceasing remedies—not without effect, but not effect enough. I have seen no one and have not attempted to transact any business." On June 8th he wrote to Lady Chesterfield from Whitehall Gardens—"I tried to write to you yesterday but could not. It was not from want of time but want of spirit. . . . The remedies they gave me to restore my voice, and which were successful, over-stimulated a very sensitive temperament and brought out some gout which is always latent. . . . So I have been very unwell for some days, and when I am unwell I feel the loneliness of my life. There is nobody I care for in the world except yourself and Selina. One I never see and the other rarely. This is not encouraging." But the situation in Parliament was such that he was obliged to struggle against his in-

firmities. "We have a busy and anxious night in both Houses," he mentioned at the end of his letter to Lady Chesterfield; and at half past seven he wrote a hurried note to Lady Bradford—"Bulletin favorable, and if I could have remained at home to-day, I think all would have been right." This was followed half an hour later by a much fuller letter:

House of Commons,
June 8th, 1874. 8 o'clock

I thought you would like to have a bulletin, if only it were to thank you for your kind note which sustains me.

I got down here in rather a shattered state, but did my work to my satisfaction and I think, on the whole, put everything very right. The Licensing Bill galloped through Committee and on the most important clause, on which our opponents fortunately selected to fight, we had a large majority. Everything else is as well as it can be—and I see no breakers ahead of any kind except the Church Bill, which is not our child and of which the fortunes are very obscure.

I have had a very agreeable letter from the Faery. Do you think you could receive me to-morrow at three o'clock? It seems so very long since I have seen you and I have so very much to say to you. If you cannot, I will endeavour to come up from the House at six, but this is always doubtful; and if neither proposal will fit one must look forward to some other time.

This will meet you returning from banquets, concerts and, perhaps, balls. You need not read it now; you can read it when you wake from rosy dreams. Then you will

also consider, I pray, the following—All day long, unable to attend to anything, Mrs. Baillie Cochrane has been sending me invitations to dinner. I declined the 14th and alleged the reason; now comes another for the 21st. If somebody were going to dine there on the 21st I should accept it. If not, nothing would induce me.

It would be very kind of you to-morrow morning, if you would give me a hint anent.

Yours ever,

D

The exertion brought on a relapse. "When I had got the Rating Bill through about half past ten," he told Lady Chesterfield in his letter of June 9th, "I went away in order that I might go to the Duchess of Buccleugh's concert where I should see Selina who dined there; but my right foot pained me and I went home—and I had a night of suffering. I am in bed and in much gout and write to you with some difficulty." And his first thought on the morning of the 10th was to write to Lady Bradford:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 10th, 1874

This is my first letter. I had another sleepless night and unceasing pain—and of course this has knocked me up; but it is the normal law of these attacks, I am told, and as I am now out of pain the crisis is over, and I shall probably have a fine sleep and, perhaps, be convalescent to-morrow, though a little weak. It is not banquets and concerts that I care to lose, all that my heart and brain are concentrated

in is to see you, if only for a moment, before you go to Ascot; where, by the by, I am invited by the Hardwickes.

I left the House of Commons on Monday night at 10 o'clock—all the difficulties about the Licensing Bill being triumphantly over—with the view of going to Montagu House; but when I began to dress I found I hobbled, and a Prime Minister hobbling would never do, so I gave it wisely up as it turned out.

I have a great deal to tell you; every minute something happens, but all well. If I live for ever, I shall never be sufficiently grateful for your kind words of yesterday. They console and inspire.

D

Disraeli's letters during the following days were an odd mixture of self-commiseration on the score of the emptiness of his life and of elation at the success of his policy in Parliament, interspersed with comments on items of social interest. "I have had a very good night," he told Lady Bradford on June 11th, "and have no pain; but I cannot move and am obliged to be wheeled in a chair. A sad prospect, I fear, of seeing you! . . . I don't suppose that I shall be able to get to the House of Commons till Monday; but that I may see you before, somehow or other, is, at the moment, my sovereign wish." News of the engagement of Lady Sibell Lumley, Lady Newport's sister, to Lord Grosvenor delighted him—"The news in your second delightful letter of yesterday was most interesting to me, knowing both the hero and ye heroine—the latter through your kindness—which makes everything more de-

lightful." He wrote a little irritably of the public banquets which, as Prime Minister, he was expected to attend:

My two public banquets are 24th and 27th. The first is my installation and glorification as a Merchant Taylor at which, I believe, ye Master of ye Horse assists, and the other is the Trinity House Feast under the auspices of the Duke of Edinburgh who is Master, and the Prince of Wales who is never absent. The first I must attend if well enough; the second I could throw over—it is a hot, sultry and rather stupid affair, a gorgeous fish dinner on Tower Hill in the sacred week of June, when we ought to be wandering in Midsummer forests, sighing to Titania and looking after Pucks.

But news of progress in the House of Commons made pleasant reading—"There are no troubles or difficulties in the House of Commons; and the division of yesterday, which was really taken on my advice, given in the General Election, seals the fate of the Liberal party for many years." The vindication of his judgment in the solution of any political puzzle afforded him keen satisfaction:

Yesterday about six o'clock [he wrote on June 12th] I was invaded by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Manners, Barrington with pale faces and distracted air, bringing me a paper signed by all the Irish members of both sides, announcing that they must vote against the Ministry on the Factory Bill unless Ireland was exempted from its provisions. In their alarm they seemed inclined to yield. I said that such a representation, if it were a just one, ought

to have been made to me long ago, not when my Secretary of State was moving the second reading of the Bill. Secondly that the representation was unjust and absurd. That to exempt the flax spinners of Belfast from the restriction on labor placed on the flax spinners of Yorkshire would be, in fact, establishing a system of Protection in favor of Ireland. My friends were much alarmed; but I was clear as to our course and that it was better to be beaten than to yield to such remonstrances. You see the result—we had 200 majority.

But satisfaction was at once dimmed by news causing him annoyance on personal grounds; and in the same letter he wrote bitterly of his unhappy lot:

Bradford paid me a visit yesterday. I was in hopes it was a domestic one, but it turned out to be strictly official. However, he did tell that on Monday you were all going away for a week, and though I feel that I knew it before, it made the rest of my day wretched and my bulletin this morning is not so good—I really think in consequence. It is a most dreary and lonely life mine, consisting of red boxes and visits of colleagues . . . Of all my perplexities at present the greatest is what you say about my messengers. They may wait at your house the whole day and are the slaves of your will. A messenger from a Prime Minister to a Mistress of the Horse cannot say his soul is his own.

The night's rest did little to restore him—"I cannot give a good bulletin of myself and, therefore, I will send no

LORD FORESTER, FATHER OF ANNE AND SELINA

From a miniature

more. I have a bad prospect of being in my place on Monday, and none of seeing you before your departure to Ascot."

Another twenty-four hours, however, brought hope which seemed almost too good to be true:

"2 Whitehall Gardens,
Sunday, half past 6, June 14th, 1874

Lord Bradford paid me a most agreeable visit and said he thought you would call on me to-morrow; but I fear that must be impossible, remembering you will have to leave town to-morrow in the afternoon.

I must, if possible, be at the House to-morrow. The week went well, because I was there last Monday and had arranged the week; but to-morrow there are difficulties—I won't say dangers—and I must be there.

Nevertheless, the exertion would be too much for me to call in Belgrave Square; but if by any chance you could call—and I am not selfish enough to press it—I could have the honor to receive you in my salon, as I must descend the stairs in the course of the day.

I have had a very good night, without pain.

Yours ever,

D

P.S. I shall be ready to receive you from 12 till I go to the House.

The visit took place; and the effect of it is to be seen in the length and tone of Disraeli's letter, written the next day:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 16th, 1874

Very well indeed, after what must now be acknowledged to have been a somewhat reckless enterprise yesterday. But it was absolutely necessary. All went well at the House. I made my entrance through an *escalier derobé,* with comparative ease and unobserved. The House was cordial, cheered me very much when I first rose and answered a question about a picture; and I entirely squashed the great Motion about a Minister of Education which, we were told a few days ago, the Opposition were certain to carry. I spoke with ease, without nervousness which I anticipated suffering from, having been on my back for a week without stimulus and in solitude. However, nothing could be more satisfactory. I got away by 8 o'clock though the House went on triumphantly at estimates till two.

My medico came at ten; he had been strongly against the venture and rightly so. But he admitted that I had apparently suffered little and that if I would now follow his advice and lie up for two days, I should be quite myself again. This I could manage to do, and though I suffered a little relapse from standing so long while speaking, I have already regained what I had lost.

Enough about my wearisome self. Your visit cheered and charmed me. Of all the kind things you have done in my occasional cares and sorrows, I doubt whether you ever did anything more delightful; more full of grace and graciousness. I think you are the most unselfish person I ever was acquainted with and that, united to a gay spirit, offers an ineffable charm.

Your friend, or our friend, Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia, has

been doing the most wonderful things at Paris; perpetrating absurdities beyond even his supposed tether, and that was a long one. Polichinelle was never so wildly grotesque. The telegrams have been pouring in hourly—and if there were a man in France, there must be a crisis, or a catastrophe, or something. But there is no man, and soon there will be no woman. Everything has been ground to powder; Monarchy, Church, Aristocracy, Middle class, Proletaires; the game is up, and for my part I see nothing left for La Belle but Partition.

Volumes from the Faery to-day on a domestic subject which will end by giving me as much trouble as to herself. But this will keep for your private ear; if indeed I ever have time, or opportunity, to tell you anything. So far as I can judge, there are at least one month's arrears of remarks and observations, for I only had ten minutes conversation with you at Hughenden—and that is nearly a month ago. We have never had time even to talk over your visit together. Bradford sent me a most kind telegram to-day—and nothing but intense prudence, and the determination to be in rude health when you return, prevented my accepting it.

Remember you are engaged to strawberries on Saturday. I shall write to the ladies of your Court and they will find their notes on their return from Ascot on Friday.

I was just about to tell you that the Faery seemed quite unconscious of my illness, when I received the enclosed.

Yours ever,

D

It was not without reason that Disraeli commented sharply upon the performance of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia, French Ambassador in London. In Paris the Committee of Thirty under the chairmanship of M. de Batbie was in session for the purpose of taking the Constitutional laws into consideration. On June 15th, programmes for submission to the Committee had been expounded by the Left Centre and Right Centre parties, when a sensation was caused by the appearance of the Ambassador in the tribune with a proposition framed in the interests of uncompromising Legitimacy. Such a proceeding on the part of a man occupying such a position was regarded as being in the highest degree improper; and at the request of the President, Marshal MacMahon, the Duke resigned his appointment the same evening. The news was not unexpected, for before it reached him Disraeli wrote to Lady Chesterfield—"The French Ambassador has been making a wonderful fool of himself in the Assembly and I should think, in consequence, should not return to St. James's."

For Disraeli Ascot week was divided between interest in Lady Bradford's doings there, and his own varying health and political activities in London. "I hope Boscobel will appear and conquer," he wrote on June 17th. Lord Bradford's horse appeared, but unsuccessfully—"Our Boscobel was at least placed," Disraeli commented on the 18th, "and beaten by something. I dreamed he had won having had a superstition that way, and should have been so glad that Bradford had been victorious." He bemoaned the fact

that illness had obliged him to postpone a meeting of the Cabinet to the 18th—"I'm sorry now," he wrote on the 17th, "because if we had had the Cabinet to-day, I might have dropped down, perhaps, and seen the glories of Ascot and yourself." The postponed Cabinet was a long one—"An early and long Cabinet," he wrote on the 18th, "and generally great pressure the whole day, so I can scarcely find time to write even to you." He added that he had written every day, had received a letter from her that morning and counted on hearing again the next day. "It will be hard-hearted if it does not throw out some suggestion about my seeing you to-morrow, if only for ten minutes." In this he was apparently disappointed for in a brief note written on the 20th he remarked a little acidly—"Public affairs are fortunately not so gloomy as private." The cause of his satisfaction with public matters is disclosed in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

House of Commons,
June 20th, 1874

A hurried line—yesterday was a very hard day in the House. The Opposition got so irritated at all our new proposals in the Licensing Bill which are very popular, that they waxed factious, and resolved to delay business and throw over the Bill till next Monday. I had a great force and beat them throughout the night by large majorities.

My new troops got blooded and begged me to sit up dividing till 5 o'clock in the morning—and I am not sure I should not have done so, had I not found out that I could appoint a Morning Sitting without notice. This quite

turned their flank. We met this morning accordingly and have carried the Bill through; a great triumph!

Now it is 6 o'clock and I send you this line with my best love.

D

A meeting with Lady Bradford on her return from Ascot did much to restore him:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 22nd, 1874

A good bulletin—excellent night and the hostile symptoms fast subsiding. I am naturally, therefore, in good cue; for had it not been for your presence yesterday, which always soothes or inspires me, I think I should have broken down.

I have also just received a most gracious letter from the Faery, who will be at Windsor on Wednesday and wishes to see me as soon as public business will let me come down!

She is "much distressed at my severe suffering."

Ever yours,

D

On June the 24th it fell to the lot of the Prime Minister to attend a public banquet at the Merchant Taylors Hall.

"This is a very busy week," he complained to Lady Chesterfield, "and I have scarcely spirit to do all that falls to my lot. . . . Banquets to one who must not eat or drink are wearisome ceremonies. . . ." The function was no better than he had expected, if we may judge by his letter of the 25th to Lady Bradford:

House of Commons,
Half past 8, June 25th, 1874

Your note has just welcomed me in my room. In my dreary life it is like a Pharos to a traveller on a dark sea. Language cannot convey my mortification and disappointment at not getting to the Palace last night. It seemed to me my existence was a series of sacrifices. But I did not escape from the Hall of the Taylors till midnight, and exhausted, not by the words I uttered but by sitting for hours at a banquet of which I could not partake, in a hall of gas like the Hall of Eblis in Valhalla, and listening to the inane observations of the Master Taylor who felt it his duty, as a host, to inundate me with his platitudes.

I might be at Evelyn's [8] to-night and see you! And I am detained by an infernal debate on the Gold Coast Policy of Evelyn's husband! Such is life! No wonder people go mad!

After I have started the House of Commons to-morrow, I would look in at Montagu House, if you are going there. Let me know, pray.

The Faery was *even more kind to-day*. But there is so much to tell you—and it seems to me we never have a moment together. Oh! for the woods of Hughenden and Weston.

I saw Bradford last night, but that was all. He was obliged to fly,[9] and I am sorry he had the trouble to go so far—only for turtle soup and venison, not as good as his own.

Yours ever,

D

[8] Lady Carnarvon.

[9] Lord Bradford who was dining at the Merchant Taylors Hall, was sent for by the Prince of Wales, and had to leave in the middle of dinner.

On Sunday June 28th, Disraeli, contrary to his custom at this time, accepted an invitation to dine out—"I thought my dinner yesterday would never end," he told Lady Chesterfield the next day, "but the heaviness was in myself, not in my hosts or their guests. . . . The only thing that amused me was Baron Rothschild taking me aside after dinner and saying, 'Why are you so pensive? Is there anything wrong in Foreign Affairs?'" In a postscript is to be found the clue to his gloom—"The only conversation at dinner was that horrid ball." The ball had been a fancy-dress affair at which Disraeli had looked forward to an assignation with Lady Bradford. But Lady Bradford had received the suggestion coldly and Disraeli's feelings had been grievously hurt; and he had, therefore, stayed away. His note to her the next morning had been curt:

Saturday, June 27th, 1874

I cannot call upon you to-day as I thought I had informed you. I am engaged to go to the Trinity House, where I must be about six; and I regret that I have an engagement to-morrow for dinner.

D

Reflection only left him bitterer and more profoundly consumed with melancholy, and at length he gave vent to his feelings on paper:

House of Commons,
June 29th, 1874

I am distressed at the relations which have arisen between us and, after two days' reflection, I have resolved to write

once more. I went to Montagu House on Friday with great difficulty to see you, and to speak to you on a matter of interest to me. I thought your manner was chilling; you appeared to avoid me and when, perhaps somewhat intrusively—but I had no other chance, I saw you were on the point of quitting me—I suggested some mode by which we might recognise each other at the ball, you only advised me not to go!

Your feelings to me are not the same as mine have been to you. That is natural and reasonable. Mine make me sensitive and perhaps exigeant, and render my society in public embarrassing to you, and therefore not agreeable. Unfortunately for me, my imagination did not desert me with my youth. I have always felt this a great misfortune. It would have involved me in calamities, had not nature bestowed on me, and in a large degree, another quality—the sense of the ridiculous. That has given me many intimations during some months; but in the turbulence of my heart, I was deaf to them. Reflection, however, is irresistible; and I cannot resist, certainly, the conviction that much in my conduct to you during this year has been absurd.

On Friday night I had written to you to ask you to forget it, and to forget me. But I linger round the tie on which I had staked my happiness. You may deride my weakness; but I wished you to know my inward thoughts, and that you should not hereafter think of me as one who was ungrateful or capricious.

D

To these outbursts Lady Bradford was becoming accustomed, and she knew well how to pen the soft answer which

turneth away wrath. Disraeli was easily mollified. "I will come on to you at twelve o'clock," he wrote in answer to her explanation the next day. "If you have engagements, don't let this embarrass you. Then I will call again at half past one, or half past two if it be more convenient. A message will tell me that." A successful day in Parliament completed the restoration of his spirits:

10 Downing Street,
June 30th, 1874

Dearest Lady C.,

Meeting of the Peers successful.

Great triumph in the Commons.

Repetition of the Lyon Playfair attack on Education. Evelyn Ashley with an amendment on Carnarvon's policy. House crowded—all the enemy brought up and ultimately they offered to withdraw their amendment which we refused.

They dared not divide and it was negatived without a division.

We should have had eighty majority.

Your affec.

D

CHAPTER VI

July 1874

A STRENUOUS BUT FRUITFUL SESSION

The last day of June provided the Irish members in the House of Commons with an opportunity which they were not slow to take advantage of. "You will be going to Chiswick rather early," Disraeli wrote to Lady Bradford. "I cannot go as usual having Home Rule. Hélas!" The debate went well for the Government. "Our Irish Attorney-General made a great speech last night," he wrote on July 1st, "rhetorical yet full of telling detail. I think he touched all the points. But it was impossible to conclude the debate which I must do on Thursday." In due course he wrote to Lady Bradford an account of the final night of the debate:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 3rd, 1874

. . . Yesterday's debate was satisfactory. I think Home Rule received its *coup de grâce*. Hartington had spoken in a manner worthy the subject and his own position on the previous night. Yesterday, Beach quite confirmed his rising reputation in the house and the public confidence in my discrimination of character and capacity. Lowe was very good; terse, logical and severely humorous; and your friend

was not displeased with himself which for him, you know, is saying a great deal. The report in the *Times* will give you an idea of the general impression in the House, though it is really a series of revues and barbarisms. If you have the *Morning Post* read the first twenty or thirty lines. They are verbatim as I expressed myself, and I think are very good sense. I defy any human being to annex any meaning to the first 20 or 30 lines in the *Times*. But the excellence of the report is not supported in the *Post*. The most effective passage in my speech was the reference to the three Irish Prime Ministers I had known, the *three Irish Viceroys* &c. &c. All this in the synopsis in the *Times* appears; but in the report it is a hash, and the 3 Irish Viceroys are turned into three judges. A curious piece of ignorance is *"morbid sentiment"* turned into a "mere bit of sentiment," which is a feeble vulgarism. Being confined to my sofa, I have time and disposition to indulge in these criticisms, though I should not mention them to anyone but you. The division was overwhelming but the arguments against the Motion were even more so. Butt was left without a shred on his shoulders.

Disraeli was confined to his sofa by a return of the gout, which he attributed to "a boot imprudently worn at a delightful concert," and had been obliged to go down to the House of Commons the day before "in a black velvet shoe of Venetian fashion, part of my dress for that unhappy masque ball, my absence from which causes such endless enquiries which exhaust even my imagination for replies." It was, indeed, long before chaff over his absence ceased; and so

long after the event as July 9th, he was still complaining of his embarrassment in explaining it:

Dearest, dearest Lady Ches.,

. . . Yesterday everything agreeable at the Palace. I found a seat next to Selina and I took her to supper. She was standing by me in the Royal circle when the Prince of Wales, Princess Mary and others came up in turn and asked why I had not been at the Masque Ball? I said to some it was a secret and that I was bound not to tell. I said to the Princess of Wales that I was draped in my domino and about to go, when a fair Venetian gave me a goblet of Aqua Tafana and I sank to the ground in a state of asphyxia. Selina heard all this.

Of his attack of gout on this occasion Disraeli made light. "I was so very happy at the concert," he told Lady Chesterfield, "that I can afford to laugh at the twinges which it occasioned. Physical twinges are nothing." And he took advantage of his enforced captivity to enlarge, in a letter to Lady Bradford, upon a fresh link which he thought that he had discovered between them:

I hope, now and then, you will go on looking at my works. An author should no more talk of his books than a parent of her children. And not even to you would I ever have mentioned the subject had not you originated it. Now I feel there is another tie between us, the absence of which I sometimes deplored. My works are my life. They are all written from my own feelings and experience except, per-

haps, the somewhat puerile frivolity that is now amusing you. That was the next book I wrote after "Vivian Grey" and I was not more than 2 or 3 and twenty. And yet Knatchbull Hugessen who, though not a political, is a literary supporter of mine, told me in the lobby the other day when we were dividing, that there is a wonderful parliamentary criticism towards the end of the "Young Duke" in which I foretell my style, &c. &c., in the House of Commons. In time, you will perhaps find it.

I think I heard from you, that you possessed the new collected edition of these books. They commence with the last written and end with the first. This was because the public demanded a single-volume edition of "Lothair." But to that first volume containing "Lothair" is appended a critical preface giving some account of all my writings and tracing my development in that respect. I wish you would read it.

These pages of egotism must cease and yet I can assure you I am thinking much more of somebody else than of myself. My excuse must be the pleasure that I feel, that there is an additional source of sympathy between us; and one which I had quite brought myself to believe could never exist.

How glad I am that I have been at Weston and can conjure you up in your sweet and stately home!

Letters on these lines pleased Lady Bradford better than the missives surcharged with emotion which she sometimes received, as she apparently told him; for he wrote about this time—"I am glad you think I am 'better and wiser of late.' I feel I am changed, but I am much happier." Yet senti-

ment, never far from the surface, would constantly intrude, and a day or two later he wrote—"I delight to hear of your roses which I also love. They seem to me precisely to suit you—often you remind me of them in the sweetness of your disposition and the fragrant brightness of your mien." And even the subject of literature was not always proof against the ardour of Disraeli's feelings:

I should like you very much to read "Venetia." It is a very different book from "The Young Duke." It was written in the maturity of my youth when I was thirty, eight years after "The Young Duke," and I had travelled much, and seen a good deal of the world in the interval, and thought over what I had seen. When you read "Venetia" you will see what it is for a woman to have a man of imagination for her lover. It is hoped, however in this prosaic age, these turbulent animals have become extinct.

. . . Long, very long after "Venetia" was fulfilled—nearly twenty years afterwards—Lord Ellenborough told Clementina Villiers that "Venetia" was the book that had most fascinated him in life, and Clemmy of course goodnaturedly told me.[1]

And invitations to two dances, one to be given in costume by Lady Marian Alford and the other by the Prince of Wales stirred unpleasant memories:

I suppose you will not permit me to go to the Fancy Ball any more than to the Ridotto? Perhaps with the Lord

[1] Letter dated July 5th, 1874. Clementina Villiers was a daughter of the 5th Earl of Jersey. She died unmarried in 1853.

Mayor's stupid dinner, it would be physically impossible. I see by the invitation that you are not permitted to come in uniforms or Court dresses. It must be ideal. Sir Robert Peel went when he was Premier as Sir Robert Walpole. The Fête was at Buckingham Palace and was limited to the first half of the eighteenth century.

All these reflections induced a mood of melancholy:

I hope I may have a line from you on Monday evening—if only a line. The loneliness of my life does not so much oppress me in real solitude, for there one can take refuge in beautiful and creative reverie; but loneliness in a great city meets you with the wings of your imagination furled, and human sympathy would be grateful then, even to a Richelieu.

Any small thing which he could do to please the sisters gave him immense satisfaction:

10 Downing Street,
July 8th, 1874

Dearest Lady C.,

Don't be later than 5 o'clock. There is a vacant canonry at York. You shall give it to Orlando.[2]

Yours ever,

D

The appointment was approved, and Disraeli hastened so to inform Lady Bradford on July 12th. "The Faery has

[2] Rev. the Hon. O. Forester.

approved of Orlando's Canonry, so it is no longer a secret and will probably be in the papers to-morrow."

From now onwards until the end of the Session the pressure of business increased; but Disraeli found time to write of the more important events in a series of letters to Lady Chesterfield:

July 9th, 1874

I am more than grieved that I can't reach you to-day, but I am greatly pressed with affairs . . . I am obliged to be at the House of Commons at four where I must probably sit till midnight before I rise and make what is called "an effort."

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Friday, July 10th, 1874

Dearest Lady C.,

I am overwhelmed with affairs—was most disappointed at not being able to reach you yesterday—and to-day is worse—but in case I do not catch a glimpse of you I have engaged myself to dine in Carlton Gardens to meet you at dinner. Nothing else would have tempted me to dine in this hot weather and with the pressure of affairs I now have.

The storm that broke over the House of Commons last night was not wilder than the elements within.

Your fruit is delicious—and is the only food I care for.

Adieu! my dearest Lady C.

Yours,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 14th, 1874. Half past seven o'clock

Dearest Lady C.,

I have not been able to leave my seat all day. *An immense triumph! Gladstone ran away.*

I find nothing but roses and beautiful things.

I am going to the Banquet and shall come to you to-morrow.

Adieu!
Ever,

D

Am better.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Tuesday, July 21st, 1874

Dearest Lady C.,

I write to you in the midst of immense pressure—and have not a moment. I saw Selina on Saturday—and dined at the Wharncliffes on the following day and took her to dinner. It was a very agreeable party. Yesterday in the midst of a Tory debate I went and dined at the Wiltons—but got down to the House in good time for business—and I am going there now—a critical night rather.

I am pretty well—on my feet.

To-morrow a busy day—the banquet in the City and other things. I will try to write you a line though about to-night, and all—

Your affectionate

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 23rd, 1874

I am so pressed, my dearest friend, with affairs that I can scarcely attempt to write a letter, though I wish you to feel that even in the whirl of business I never forget you.

Yesterday was a hard day—House of Commons all the morning from 12 to 6—in a state of faction—then just time to dress to get to the Lord Mayor's and then to the Prince's ball, where I took Selina to supper and to a royal table.

I hope she will give you a sketch, or rather a picture, of the fantastic scene; I would write you pages in more quiet times. It was a great success: gorgeous, brilliant, fantastic. The male dresses much more successful than the ladies' who looked, in many instances, in ordinary costume only a little more fanciful and richer.

Lady Hardwicke, in black velvet as Queen Henrietta Maria, really looked as if she had stepped out of a frame of Vandyke. Duke of Abercorn as Strafford, Dunmore as Philip 2nd, Duke of Buccleugh as one of his ancestors, very good indeed.

The most striking and the most perfect and finished was Lord Rosebery as Barbe Bleu—it was like one of Mlle. D'Aulois' faery tales.

Selina was a Gainsboro', but I admire her so much in her accustomed evening attire that I was not more fascinated by her fanciful costume.

I must go.

Adieu! Adieu!

D

House of Commons.
July 24th, 1874

Dearest Lady C.,

I am obliged to snatch a moment to write to you from the House of Commons for I am always there, morning and night, and even to-morrow, Saturday, we are to sit all day, and even with this I shall not be able to close affairs till past the first week of August.

Carnarvon was much wanted to-day in the most critical Cabinet of the Session; however, all has ended well apparently.

After the Cabinet and after going down to this place to make a statement, I rushed away for a moment to see Selina before she took her drive. I found her very well and, after all her social labors, ready to face another fancy ball to-night, at Apsley House, where all the peacocks and peahens are again to exhibit their splendor. I shall refrain; but I never told you I went to Marlborough House in official attire. It was a gracious privilege accorded to me by the Prince, on condition that I kept the permission secret.

The Duke of Cambridge was the only other privileged mortal; and really I don't think Commanders-in-Chief and Prime Ministers ought to figure in Charles the 2nd wigs and false mustachios.

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 27th, 1874

I was quite distressed, dearest Lady C., that I missed the post yesterday, but it goes out early on Sunday and I had such a train of persons, all on pressing affairs as is

natural when Parliament is about to close, that time beat me.

We have had an engrossing week in Parliament, which is the cause of my not having seen much of Selina. I am happy to say no other cause. I had the pleasure of meeting her at dinner on Saturday at the Sturts and sate next to her. It was an agreeable party. The Manchesters, Lady A. Hartington and Lord Claud Hamilton and Calthorpe . . . .

I am not going to the fish Dinner, but I fear I shall not be able to manage a visit to Highclere now. There is so much to do at the windup, and writing the Queen's speech is not the easiest part of it. Somehow or other you and I will soon meet, and I do not by any means despair of a summer visit to Bretby.

The stories about Prince Leopold's illness are exaggerated. I found the company at Sturt's all in despair when I arrived on Saturday, as they thought the Goodwood House gathering must be given up; but I reassured them for I had received a letter from the Queen as I entered my carriage.

They are to make up 167 beds at Goodwood (everything included of course); there are 74 Royal servants and the Prince has 40 horses!

Your affectionate

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 28th, 1874

Yesterday, my dearest Lady C., was a very hard day in the House of Commons. We sate from 4 o'clock p.m. to half past 3 o'clock a.m. only wanting half an hour to make the

twelve complete. But we did a great deal of business: closed the Committee of Supply and pushed on many Bills.

Among the votes was one for the pictures I bought; but after all their swagger and scribbling, not a man dared to say anything and had it not been for Mr. Hankey who really did not disapprove of the purchase, it would have passed in silence. He forced me to get up and the result was the vote passed amid the cheers of both sides.

It is now two o'clock and I am going to Downing Street to receive five interviews which I have put off day after day —but like importunate creditors they will be paid.

4 o'clock.

I took this with me to Downing Street that I might have the chance of writing a few more lines—but it is impossible. My visitors, wanting all sorts of things from peerages to pensions—from the high empyrean to the shades of Hades—have all gone and I must rush to the House where, however, you will not be forgotten by

Your affectionate

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 31st, 1874

My dearest Lady C.,

This is the hardest life I ever went through. Yesterday I was literally 12 hours in my place—from 4 to 4—the Irishry having resolved to defeat, by delay, an absolutely necessary measure. It was a remarkable scene, but I have not energy to write it. Its character changed frequently. At first the Liberal party held aloof from the Fenians whom they privately abused: then about one o'clock in the morning,

unable to resist the temptation of embarrassing, or defeating, the Government, they all joined the Rebels; but even then we had a majority of 61—then the Irishry began to quarrel among themselves. I treated Brett and his immediate counsellors as gentlemen which they certainly are not; but their vanity is so great that they did nothing but pay me compliments and got ashamed of their low associates, the pork butchers of Cavan, &c., who are now County Members!

Finally at 4 o'clock we carried the Bill through Committee with loud cheers. Dyke, our head whip, ordered in the great dining room a supper of grilled bones and champagne for the Tories, ready at two. This showed we were determined and daunted the Fenians who are deficient in staying power though at the onset excited and violent.

I have had only two hours of disturbed rest and literally cannot see out of my eyes—and I have a harder day and night before me. I have written to Carnarvon about Highclere for Saturday. There is no hope. I cannot leave this place for a moment, till I go to Osborne on Thursday. There is so much to do and so many things at the same time. I am wanted every moment.

I fear you will hardly make out this feeble scrawl.

We had a charming dinner at Cis'; only ourselves. I thought Selina looking very well—but she has gone!

I hope I shall see you before I go to Osborne; I heard a rumor that you might be in town on Monday. If you do not come we shall not meet till Bretby—but I always love you.

D

Of the exhaustion of these closing days of an eventful Session, he gave a vivid account to Lady Bradford:

July 31st, 1874

It was past four when I got home and I could not sleep. I have really only had two hours' troubled and fitful slumber and literally cannot see out of my eyes. Sir Arthur Helps has just been here about the Osborne Council, and all the time he was speaking, I saw two Sir Arthurs. When I got in the morning a little slumber, I had a terrible dream! I thought we were at some great festival and that you behaved to me with much unkindness. It was most vivid, the scene palatian and water in the distance and many characters. You told me you were going on the water with somebody in a gondola, and then you were on his arm and walked away. I think I never felt such anguish and I vowed, whatever happened, nothing should induce me to see you or speak to you again. My sufferings were so great they woke me, and I cannot express to you my relief as I gradually realised—and slowly too—that I was not the most unhappy of men and that the spell—which is the charm and consolation of my life—was still unbroken. It makes me write to you though I have a harder day and night before me.

Yours,

D

But it is to his letters to Lady Chesterfield that we have to turn for information concerning the affairs of State—"The Brussels Conference is now sitting," he wrote on August 1st, "and the telegrams come in like a snowstorm." Of an unexpected success in a by-election at Kidderminster he wrote on the 2nd—"we had little hope; but our man—and not a good candidate—was returned by one of the most

democratic and popular constituencies in the kingdom, by a vast majority. And Sir W. Frazer writes me that it was entirely through my personal popularity with the working classes."

The Session was not to end without adding one serious anxiety to the exhaustion from which Disraeli was suffering. The fate of the Public Worship Regulation Bill hung in the balance. Was the right accorded by it to the Bishops, of vetoing frivolous prosecutions of the clergy under them for ritualistic practices, to be absolute? The Commons thought not and inserted provision for an appeal to the Archbishop of the Province. Against this curtailment of the unfettered discretion of the Bishops within their own dioceses, the High Church party rebelled and at the instigation of Lord Salisbury the amendment was rejected by the House of Lords. Disraeli was gravely perturbed:

Private 2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 5th, 1874

Things are as bad as possible: I think the Bill is lost, but worse things will happen in its train.

I found Carnarvon at the Carlton dining in a tumultuous crowd of starving senators. He not only voted against the Archbishops, Lord Chancellor and Duke of Richmond, but spoke against them—and did as much harm as Salisbury: more they say.

Any news from Selina? Amid all my troubles I think of her.

Your affectionate in terrible haste,

D

Bradford was there and voted right. The majority was made by Government officials—4 Lords in waiting went wrong and alleged Carnarvon and Salisbury as their justification.

It was a striking testimony to Disraeli's influence that the House of Commons were persuaded to give up their amendment and to pass the Bill—a gratifying termination to a successful Session.

During these strenuous days Disraeli had found time to write frequently to Lady Bradford. But his letters to her had dealt less with facts than with ideas, less with the crowded sequence of events than with the kaleidoscopic changes in his own feelings:

July 12th, 1874

I saw very little of you yesterday at Hatfield, though I tried to see much; but though I knew your costume by heart, I never could trace you. I once walked even to the maze and was nearly tempted to find you inside. I sate at dinner next to the Crown Princess who took the opportunity of making one of her grandest displays—æsthetical, literary, philosophical; a very great contrast to your conversation, my Lady. And which do you think pleased me most?

He added that he had received four letters from the Faery in less than twenty-four hours. "One has just arrived and praises me to the 7th Heaven for my management of the Cabinet." The whirl of gaiety in which Lady Bradford was caught up, appalled him. "I wonder you can endure these Balls," he wrote on July 14th, "but especially these Royal

suppers—with their elaborate delicacies immediately after dinner! How very dreadful!" Yet he bemoaned the fate that had so often prevented him from sharing them:

July 16th, 1874

I could not venture last night to the fountain of Castaby, even on the chance—rather the certainty—of seeing you. When I remember the many occasions this season that business or indisposition has deprived me of that consummate gratification, and recall the dreary months of unsympathetic isolation that await me, I am almost mad. I can recall—having a very tenacious memory—every time that we have met since last autumn, and almost every word that you have said. In solitude there has been solace in dwelling on a past adorned by so much grace and kindness. Now I shall only live upon the lost opportunities of my miserable life; brood over banquets where there was ever a vacant chair, and festivals of light and music where you were admired by everyone but my absent self. What would I not give to go to Holland House to-day and meet you! Instead of that I must be shut up in a chamber reeking with mediæval superstition.

D

Sometimes circumstances obliged him to take part in social functions from which Lady Bradford herself was absent. His description of such occasions tended to be scathing:

July 19th, 1874

Though they had changed the hour from two to one, the Crown Princess' Court never arrived till two—so I was in

more than time . . . I was seated next to the Crown Princess who soon began on her business, but was as soon silenced on that matter and then took refuge in politics and philosophy with a dash of Goethe to vary the material associations with Bismarck, on whom she dwelt very fully "in confidence," and, on the whole, was entertaining.

The guests were all the quizzes in London, except the romantic Baroness and Mrs. Brown.[3] They were chiefly relations I believe, but with the eternal Dean[4] . . . and some as odd, but more unknown, presented a coterie which a German University and a miniature Residency Court could scarcely have equalled.

In the course of the afternoon Disraeli took part in a function of a very different nature, in connection with the philanthropic activities of Lord Shaftesbury:

Having travelled four miles or so, we found ourselves in Shaftesbury Park—a town, and a very fair town, rising as it were in the desert. The great Earl had arrived and gave us a warm welcome. Then Granville arrived, for the two great parties were to be represented, and the great Earl would not have "that fellow Gladstone." I saw an astonishing spectacle, which may change England more than all the Reform Bills—and change it always for the better.

But the engagements of the day were not yet done with, for a dinner party lay ahead, and Disraeli had much to

[3] Baroness Burdett-Coutts and her friend and companion.
[4] Dean Stanley.

write of Her Grace the Duchess of Manchester, destined to become in due course Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire:

Then I dined at Barringtons. It was a Duke of Cambridge dinner to refresh him after the Wimbledon Review: only a dozen; indeed the miniature house would not hold more, but the repast, as it always is under this roof, was worthy of Apicius and thrown terribly away on one who, in addition to my habitual asceticism, had not recovered from the Imperial banquet.

There were the Manchesters, Lady Marian, the Seftons, the Baths, Hartington and your friend. Lady Marian returned my reverence very queerly and said dryly, "It is a year since I saw you." "I thought it was two," I replied. Then she laughed and said, "I cannot resist a witty retort"; and then we went on very well. So that is over. I remembered what you said about the Duchess and did a little, but not too much, not without success. I could not speak to her after dinner though I did occasionally at dinner time, because she retired to the end of the room with the Duke of Cambridge and never quitted him till the party broke up. Hartington was not near her at dinner (Bath took her out) and after dinner he could not even approach her and began to talk House of Commons shop with me, which I dislike, and so I made a little party with Lady Bath's aid and drew him into more general conversation. It was never really interesting, except to me who studied Hartington under these circumstances psychologically.

I know some, in such a position, whose heart would have been in their gorge, whose blood would have turned to bile,

who in the madness of their misery would have quitted the room and poured forth their feelings in prose or verse more insane than their own pique—and who would really have believed that their sun was set for ever and their career had closed. But Hartington, fortunately for himself, is not a Caduncio. But however phlegmatic, he was I am sure distrait and uneasy. And yet to see only the person you adore ought, if not to satisfy, at least to charm. But what is the use of moralising. It is impossible to take a lesson from Hartington if your organisation be different.

I send you this scribblement, because it would be a little chapter, or rather leaf, of life otherwise lost to you—for when I call you will have many guests.

Adieu,

D

A day or two later Disraeli was complaining of another unwished-for engagement—"At twelve o'clock to-day I must be in my place and sit till nearly six, when I must go into the city, dine with that infernal Lord Mayor, and make a speech every word of which will be scanned and criticised and which, literally, I have not been able to think of." A happy thought, however, on his part provided him with momentary satisfaction.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 20th, 1874

Dear Lady Bradford,

Here is the Talisman! Pray, accept it; its intrinsic value is nothing. I obtained it in 1831 when, "Wandering in those deserts of Africa which border the Erythrean Sea, I

THE TALISMAN GIVEN BY DISRAELI TO SELINA

came to the river Nile." When I was at Cairo I got a clever Genoese Renegado, who enamelled the pipes of the great Pasha, Mehemet Ali, to set it for me and considering that it has never been covered or protected in any manner all this long time and looks as fresh as on the first day, I think it tells to my credit, both for workmanship and material. It has never been worn or seen by anybody, and has never quitted my Despatch box. The stone is clear Kornelian.

I wish Lord B. was going to drive us down to Wycombe to-day.

Yours ever,

D

But the pleasure which he derived from her acceptance of the gift—"I am pleased that he [Lord Bradford] was not displeased that I had given you the talisman," he wrote on July 28th—was quickly dimmed by news of her imminent departure from the capital:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Friday, July 24th, 1874

. . . There is no chance of my reaching Longleat while you are there; Saturday I shall have the gratification of seeing you socially and that is always an exquisite pleasure and on Sunday I may see you, but probably not alone—and on Monday all is over!

After five months of unbroken intercourse the most confidential and the most charming, scarcely ever separated, or when separated, with the opportunity on my side of expressing my feelings—since and for ever, a sealed fountain

—it is not wonderful that when all this is about to cease, I should be shaken.

I will not suppose that you can view it entirely without emotion; but your feelings to me are not the same as mine to you, you have many sources of distraction, many claims upon your heart and I do not think you are overburthened with sensibility.

Perhaps that is a great virtue in life as well as a great advantage, and invests you with the sweet serenity that all admire. I am quite aware of my deficiencies in this respect and that you have found me exigeant, jealous, disagreeable and fitfully unreasonable. But I am what I am—and whatever my errors of this kind, my present sufferings may be the atonement.

What I wish is—that you should not leave town without our being once more alone. But that is our present prospect. All that I can do is to seize a moment, if the opportunity offers, when I know there is a chance of your being alone. I know not what may happen when the House meets; I might be able to rush to you at three, or about seven, tomorrow. The House will sit through Saturday—the whole day—but probably not on subjects which will require my constant presence. That may be a chance.

It seems a mockery to express my devotion to you—whom I may not meet for months, and then meet you with changed feelings and a changed aspect.

Your very unhappy,

D

I shall call in Whitehall after the Cabinet, in the hope I may have a line.

CHAPTER VII

August 1874

REACTION

The Session had left its mark on Disraeli and he quitted London at the end of it tired, irritable and depressed. "You seem surprised I went to Fonthill," he wrote in a letter to Lady Bradford on August 14th. "I went for distraction; I cannot bear being alone, and when I join others I am wearied. I do not think there is really any person much unhappier than I am, and not fantastically so. Fortune, fashion, fame, even power may increase, and so heighten, happiness; but they cannot create it. Happiness can only spring from the affections." In all the wide circle of his friends and acquaintances there seemed to be two persons, and two persons only, from whose society he derived, whether in circumstances of sorrow or of joy, real and abiding satisfaction. And that their society should be denied him was a source of perpetual exasperation:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 3rd, 1874

When I arrived home last night I found a letter from the Faery, absolutely telling me that she had fixed the

Council for an early hour on Thursday in order to facilitate my journey to Longleat. And this morning brings your crushing letter. Crushing not from the mere incident that we do not meet at Longleat . . . but crushing because it forced me to be conscious of my position, which I ever drive from my thoughts. To love, as I love, and rarely to see the being one adores—whose constant society is absolutely necessary to my life—to be precluded even from the only shadowy compensation for such a torturing doom—the privilege of relieving my heart by expressing its affection—is a lot which I never could endure, and cannot.

Disappointment at Lady Bradford's inability to meet him under the roof of Lord and Lady Bath at Longleat rankled; and in his mood of petulant ill-humour, he sought to relieve his feelings by penning satirical descriptions of the trivial day-to-day experiences which came his way. Thus on the eve of his departure he wrote:

I dined at Holland House; a large round table, chiefly foreigners though there was Mr. Cheney who was to meet me at Longleat, and the Leo Ellises. I like her and she plays divinely on the piano; something unlike anything I ever heard. There was an oldish dame, a Countess something, the daughter of the great Catalani, and herself with a fine voice. Lady Holland wished her very much to sing; but though she was staying in the house and had been stuffing herself immensely with truffles the whole dinner, the ungrateful hag of course refused. . . . I took an Austrian Countess to dinner who would speak English. I praised

her for her mastery of our tongue, and she swallowed my compliment as she did her plum pudding. I afterwards found out the impostor was an Englishwoman and a Seymour!

His next letter was from Longleat and described *inter alia* a visit which he had paid *en route* to the Queen at Osborne:

The Faery sent for me the instant I arrived. I can only describe my reception by telling you that I really thought she was going to embrace me. She was wreathed with smiles and as she talked, glided about the room like a bird. She told me it was all owing to my courage and tact,[1] and then she said—"To think of your having the gout all the time. How you must have suffered! And you ought not to stand now, you shall have a chair!" Only think of that! I remember that Lord Derby, after one of his illnesses, had an audience of Her Majesty, and he mentioned it to me as proof of the Queen's favor, that Her Majesty had remarked to him how sorry she was she could not ask him to be seated, the etiquette was so severe.[2]

He complained of the writing material provided by his host—"I have very bad stationery here, but I have sent for some official stores from Downing Street to-day and shall then get on better. If you find this a stupid epistle, it is the stationery. This paper, muddy ink, and pens which are

[1] Referring no doubt to the passage of the Public Worship Regulation Bill, in which the Queen was keenly interested.

[2] Letter dated August 7th, 1874.

made from the geese on a common, entirely destroy any little genius I have and literally annihilate my power of expression." And he complained also of the discomfort of the journey from Osborne:

My travelling from Southampton to Warminster was very fatiguing. I had to wait at Southampton and also at Salisbury—an hour at each place. They had telegraphed along the line to keep compartments for me, so wherever I stopped there was an enthusiastic group—"Here he is"—being the common expression, followed by three times three and little boys running after me. You know how really distressed I am at all this. And I had a headache and wanted a cup of tea and made fruitless efforts to get one . . . I got a cup of tea at Salisbury, however, from apparently a most haughty young lady; but I did not do her justice. She not only asked me for an autograph but to write it in her favorite work, "Henrietta Temple"! I could have refused the Duchess of Manchester, but absolutely had not pluck to disobey this Sultana. I never felt more ashamed of myself in my life.

At Salisbury he found Lady Paget,[3] who was going to Longleat with her son, a very young Etonian. "Sir Augustus had travelled by an earlier train with the luggage." He could not avoid offering her a seat in his compartment and she talked volubly the whole way—"An hour of prattle on all subjects from early Italian art . . ." A late arrival did not assist towards cheering the weary traveller:

[3] Wife of Sir Augustus Paget, a distinguished diplomatist of the day.

We did not get to Longleat till 9, and though we dressed in ten minutes people who dine at 8 don't like dining at 9. We were seven at table. The Pagets, our host and hostess, myself, the little Etonian who was only 12, and what I thought was another little boy but who turned out to be a little man. Unlike little men in general he never opened his lips . . . A more insipid and stupid and gloomy dinner I never assisted at, and I felt conscious I added my quota to the insipidity and the stupidity and the gloom.

Everything was done to make his visit agreeable—"Perhaps, and probably, I ought to be pleased. I can only tell you the truth, which I always do, though to no one else. I am wearied to extinction and profoundly unhappy." On August 8th other guests arrived:

Here are Malmesbury, Percy Wyndhams, Cheney in addition to the Pagets, and the great Lady Marian is to arrive to-day. I wish I were in the Black Forest of which we have all been talking à propos of the King of Bavaria . . . The beautiful view here—Heaven's Gate—did not disappoint me. It is lovely and peculiar. I am glad to have seen it. And the old library, Bishop Ken's rooms and all that will recur to one. But I am distrait, uninterested and uninteresting. Besides I always feel ill when I first come into the country after a London Session and season. The reaction is too rapid, occasioned by so rapid a change. My physical debility and disquietude are very great, my circulation low and nerves unstrung. It is best to be alone under such circumstances, or in the society of someone who sympathises with and charms you. That is a rare lot and occurs to me only

at long and uncertain intervals . . . Of all the people here I like best the Chatelaine. She is very kind and has offered more than once to be my secretary and copy things for me but says she writes an illegible hand. I rather admire it. It reminds me rather of missals and illuminated MSS.

The sixth of August is hallowed in my recollection. This has been an eventful year and one that might satisfy most men. And yet the only moments that I have been really happy—and they were brief—were on that day.

As Disraeli's work diminished, so did the length of his letters increase. Indeed his letters to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield during the next few months alone would be sufficient to fill a volume. The following to Lady Bradford may be taken as a sample:

Longleat,
August 11th, 1874

Pray never think of altering your style of writing. It has inexpressible charms to me; being natural and graceful and often picturesque. You ought to have received from me a letter, on Sunday, for which you have been too grateful and also one on Monday, which I trust reached you before your departure for Willey. Had I known you were going there, I should have sent a kind word to your brother who has always been to me a faithful friend, one of my earliest faithful supporters and one of my staunchest.

Sunday was a rainy day here, divine service in chapel. Monday (yesterday) Lady Bath drove me to Frome to see Bennett's famous church—with a sanctuary where "lay people" are requested not to place their feet; and among

other spiritual pageantry, absolutely a Calvary and of good sculpture. The Church is marvellous; exquisitely beautiful and with the exception of some tawdryness about the high altar, in admirable taste. It only cost £12,000 and as they are going to spend £6,000 on Hughenden, I think I shall have something worth your seeing. To be sure, the Frome Church was an old church restored, and we, I suspect, shall have to begin from the foundation; but I have no doubt H. will be startling enough. The priest, a sacristan or whatever he was, who showed us over the church and exhibited the sacred plate, &c., looked rather grimly upon me after my anti-ritualistic speeches—and as Lady Bath observed, refrained from exhibiting the vestments. But I praised everything and quite sincerely, and we parted if not fair friends, at least fair foes. The world found out who was there and crowded into the church. They evidently were not Bennett's congregation; however they capped me very much, which pleased Lady Bath, who would drive me, in consequence, round the town in triumph.

The party here is sufficiently gay, but I cannot contribute my share to the merriment; suffering from that mysterious attack that always fastens on me when I go into the country after the Session. The change is too sudden and the reaction too great: there is a general collapse. If I followed my own bent I would do nothing but write to you. But I have been obliged to exert myself, for, as often happens, the moment I left London great events occurred—about Spain—and I have been in almost unceasing correspondence about these affairs. As I was told to be in the air as much as possible, I have availed myself of my kind hostess' offer and let her drive me about; but the air is very damp and dissolving and

without having in the least caught cold, which I never do, I have fits of sneezing which in a Roman Catholic country might count as miracles. Remembering my Pagan lore and that good fortune attends those who sneeze to the right, I occasionally attempt the lucky operation. I think it brings me a letter from you and then my faith in my classical creed is confirmed.

The four ladies laugh together in chorus and almost unceasingly and when they retire at half past 11, and I wish, avoiding the smokers, to escape to my couch, I find them in the ante-chamber still laughing with their candlesticks in their hands, which they will not light. At last they move off, but I find them again on the landing-place of the great staircase like a caravan halting, all talking at the same time and laughing in chorus. I am obliged to break through them and vanish with a Carnival jest.

Lady Paget has exhibited herself before me in her most alluring forms. Her matchless conversation, consisting of high art and Court scandal, receives additional lustre from her undulating figure, the profusion of her cinquecent jewels, her renaissance hands and her Luini-like eyes. But Malmesbury need not be jealous of me. One, greater than I am, has finished the romance over which he fain would linger. It is with difficulty he can obtain a saunter in a flower garden a few minutes before the dinner-bell and is grateful for crumbs from the banquet. The banquet is for the great Lord of the Castle. I never saw a man so entirely absorbed in the existence of another: his eye never quits her; he hangs on every accent; he passes his morning in consulting her on his works, the salons he is painting and the galleries which are to be hung with the tapestries and the

Italian embroideries and the pictures which she has collected for him. Happy man to have such feelings and to be able to enjoy the constant society of her who inspires them; for they have got five months' leave at present and when they return Bath will again visit Italy to complete, or to continue, his collection of works of art.

So Lady P. is the heroine of the scene. Even the helter-skelter bon-mots and the breathless repartees of the too witty Lady Marian seem hushed in her presence. Mrs. Wyndham listens with admiring awe and our sweet-tempered Chatelaine sits every morning for her portrait to her all-accomplished guest—the Corinna of Diplomacy.

Poor Malmesbury who I think only came on Saturday, stole away yesterday morning; but he bore his fate like a philosopher, praised her figure to me very much and said it was lucky for Bath to have such a friend to furnish his galleries.

I sent you a telegram yesterday, fearing that your letter, if you were so good and kind as to write to me to-day, might arrive after my departure to-morrow. I am going only 18 miles, for 4 and 20 hours or so, and yet the postal arrangements are so crude here that it takes two days to communicate between Longleat and—

Lady Westminster,
Tisbury.

I thought it best, therefore, that you should direct to Whitehall which is in daily communication with me.

My plans are these. I leave this to-morrow for Fonthill, which I propose to quit on Friday, sleep in town and go to Bretby on Saturday. It is possible I may have to delay my

departure for Bretby until Monday; but either by post or telegram I will let you know my movements in time. When at Bretby you, of course, will direct to me there. Let me also know your Lacustrian direction.

Remember me most kindly to Bradford. I am gratified he approved of the speech as I have a high opinion of his judgment and good taste which is rarer even than good judgment.

I am glad also to hear such a capital account of your public works and that your alterations are improvements. There are really no persons I much care for, except those of your blood and under your roof.

Ever yours,

D

From Longleat Disraeli drove eighteen miles over the Wiltshire downs to Fonthill the seat of Sir Michael Shaw-Stewart, who married Octavia, sister of the first Duke of Westminster:

I stopped on my way at a pretty little village to water my steeds and wandered about for ten minutes. It is not even a street but detached dwellings embowered in gardens and a boulevard of linden. I asked its name and was told it was Hindon. It returned two members to Parliament before the Reform Act of 1832, and in 1830 I was in negotiation to be its member paying £1,000 per annum; and having at that time no other income but a little pocket money from my Father. Bulwer was trying at the same time for St. Ives and succeeded. I was so disgusted that I went abroad. Bulwer remained, but his first effort at a Parliamentary

career was soon cut short by ruthless fate. So we were both dancing on a volcano little dreaming that the old system was so near its extinction. The scene forced one to moralise. I recalled with vividness my bitter pang of disappointment at not representing these Cottages in the House of Commons and then thought of greater Reform Acts than Lord Grey's, and all that had happened since.

Though Disraeli was feeling better and could give a good account of himself "considering this dilapidating weather," his visit to Fonthill did not wholly please him. His hostess's mother, Lady Westminster, was "extremely agreeable and piquante, her voice dulcet, her manners not only sugary but sugar-candyish," but the basis of all her expressions and thoughts was sarcastic and he found the society of two ladies, however gifted, rather an effort for him. "However it is only for a day and as dear d'Orsay used to say—'Mon cher, c'est une chapitre.'"

The additional link which he had discovered between Lady Bradford and himself when he had found her reading his books, was proving a strong one. "I am always interested in your remarks on my books," he wrote on August 14th, "not from any vanity, I hope and believe, but because my writings being all reproductions of my own life and feelings, I naturally am curious how they affect the person who most interests myself. When I get to Bretby I shall ask Lady Ches. to lend me 'Contarini Fleming,' that I may recur to the moonlight scene you mention. I suppose it was when he was at Venice, if you have got so far." And

his first letter from Bretby was full of the same subject. Lady Ailesbury who was one of the party added little to its gaiety:

Lady A. did not help me and for the funniest reason in the world. You will never guess it and when you know it you will break into a merry laugh. She is reading "Henrietta Temple" and is so absorbed and affected by it, that we can't get her to attend to anything. Last night she began to weep and was obliged to put down the marvellous tome. Lady Ches. tells her to read "Tancred" which she greatly admires, but Lady C. can't get on with "Vivian Grey," which I never told her to read. I have no opinion of books written by boys and, therefore, I always discountenance reading "Vivian Grey" and the "Young Duke." I am most interested in what you write about your hero. I fear you will find a great lack of incident after the fatal death. It is all reflection and description. As a story book there is a want of art in this; but it was not written merely to amuse, or even principally. After all, it was not a book written by a boy, although only five years or so after "Vivian Grey"; but then they were five years passed in travel and constant thought and frequent solitude. The mind makes a great leap in such processes. But I am getting egotistical, which I always shrink from—but your sympathy, I fear, too often reduces me now into this weakness; and it is more difficult to avoid living, as it seems I do now, so strangely among a group of friends who, for the first time, are becoming acquainted with the veiled adventures and secret feelings of now a long life, "at once adventurous and contemplative."

Farewell! I will try to attend to your admonitions. Nothing that you say can ever be indifferent to me; but I fear the cause of my depression is too deep for philosophy to cure.[4]

D

And the subject would frequently recur:

Bretby Park,
August 19th, 1874

We dine at eight and even with early hours I find the evenings more embarrassing than you contemplated. One can talk for ever to one woman if she be agreeable, but two agreeable women are not so easy. They go better in single harness. Lady A. too, since she has taken to literature, shirks backgammon, and having no accomplishments of that sort I can't take her place. Lady Ches. is very indignant that Lady A. should suppose that I had given my works to her and to yourself. . . . Nothing ever more surprised me than to find you one day reading one of these things; but now it is an additional tie between us—for many reasons. Lady A. who has announced that she shall finish "Henrietta Temple" before luncheon and has not the least idea how it will end—being a strong-minded woman who never looks at the last page—is going through a course of "Coningsby," "Sybil," and "Tancred." I wish you would try "Alroy," and if you don't like it, why not "Henrietta Temple" which is such a favorite here and at Salisbury; only if you read "Sybil" and "Tancred," read "Coningsby" first, because they hang together and one leads to the other.

[4] Letter dated August 16th, 1874.

"What egoism!" Disraeli exclaimed at the end of this paragraph. But the only other item of news which he had to give his correspondent at the moment was "more egotistical still."

Captain Moresby commanding H.M.S. *Basilisk* writes me dated "The Java Seas," and says that in surveying the coasts of New Guinea he has discovered a mountain nearly as high as Mont Blanc, and that he has named it Mount Disraeli!

The quiet and regular life at Bretby did much to restore Disraeli to a state of comparative composure; and during the remainder of his stay with Lady Chesterfield before visiting Lord and Lady Bradford at their residence in the Lake country, he wrote amusingly of the trivial episodes of daily life. As he himself observed, an improvement in physical well-being brings "that serenity of mind which ought to content one, instead of those romantic thoughts that tear the heart and spirit, which ought to vanish with youth and certainly ought not to be cherished by any being who pays rents and taxes." One day it was the sermon in the country church that tickled his fancy:

Bretby Park,
August 23rd, 1874

Dear Lady B.,

I propose to find myself at Windermere on Wednesday next, at 5 o'clock and anticipate the greatest pleasure at seeing you and yours, after what seems to me so long a separation.

I shall order the finest weather to be sent down in a red box and take other decided steps to control the elements. Here, we have a dingy day and an easterly wind. Notwithstanding which church has been crowded to hear the new Canon go off, which he did in a sermon longer than the Queen would like, but not too long, in which he tackled Professor Tyndall and his recent heresies—revived, for they are literally as old as the hills.

Lady A. says that as nobody could have read the Belfast discourse except myself, the demonstration was made to confirm the faith of the Premier.

With my kindest remembrances to the Earl and indeed to all your circle,

Ever yours,

D

On another occasion it was the absent-mindedness of the same prelate:

Yesterday the Canon and the Colonel left us, the former —unintentionally I hope—with my light great coat which he has not yet returned!

But even during periods of comparative serenity, the emotional waters, never far from the surface of his being, were easily troubled—"As I make out that of the eight persons at the breakfast table," he wrote in pique on August 24th, "seven are probably about to write to you to-day, I will withdraw from the lists in which I can bring nothing that can amuse or interest you." And only a day or two before he had written in a strain of melancholy:

Bretby Park,
August 21st, 1874

Your letter to-day was unexpected, but it was much wanted. It was charming; characteristic; just as you talk—and all your letters are to me delightful. I can make no return. You must consider mine since the Longleat batch as, in diplomatic language, *non avennes*. They are weak, inconsistent, incoherent and, without meaning it, insincere, the reflex of a restless, perplexed, hampered and most unhappy spirit. All this I might explain to you, perhaps, if I am ever to see you again; but it is in vain to attempt it in writing.

I am sure, whatever they may say, I shall not be missed here; for your sister has twice (thrice) in five days drawn me aside to ask me if anything had happened; I looked so unhappy. Don't mention this to her, for it would mortify her; and to me she is everything that is considerate and kind.

I trust that to-morrow I shall receive a line from you, or some one, to say that your coast will be sufficiently clear to permit my coming to St. Catherine's on Wednesday. Monty comes here to-day.

There seems to me so much to tell you and so much to ask, and yet, when we meet, perhaps nothing will be asked and nothing will be told! Nevertheless I hope I may still call myself

Yours ever,

D

From two letters to Lady Chesterfield it appears that his brief visit to the Bradfords was a success:

St. Catherine's, Windermere,
August 27th, 1874

Dearest Lady C.,

The House here is not a very small one and there is accommodation enough. Indeed, it is quite large enough for a Lake Villa. Its grounds are considerable and look more extensive than they are, being well arranged and well timbered, with a mountain birk tumbling through the ferny rocks, gurgling and fretting and foaming.

The view from the drawing-room windows is one of the most beautiful I ever beheld: the mountains of various and captivating outlines and the banks of the lake richly wooded. I do not care for mountains 10,000 feet high; they oppress me; and so long as there is graceful and picturesque undulation of form, I prefer the moderate elevations I find here to the colossal glories of the Swiss and Italian Lakes.

Yesterday was a lovely day and I saw everything to advantage. The first impression is everything: to-day is rain and mist and darkness. I have a very heavy post, but am not in the humor to work. If I could only make up my mind to shut the windows and light the fire, I might do something.

While I was writing this, came a messenger from Lady Bradford, to shut the windows and light the fire. I like to live with some one who decides on little things; so I hope to get on, now, pretty well.

Bradford met me at the station, where there was a great crowd assembled and much cheering. As the ladies were out driving, he proposed we should continue our drive and see something of the scenery. So we got to the head of the

lake—two or three miles—and then we met the ladies returning with George Paget who very kindly gave me his place, so I came home with them.

Remember me kindly to your companion,

Your affectionate

D

And three days later he wrote:

We had a bustling day sight-seeing yesterday, but the weather though rough was, on the whole, propitious; and I visited with interest the scene of Wordsworth's life and poetry . . . All has gone on here, on the whole, perfectly well; Selina charming though fitful and my Lord absolutely friendly.

And he concluded his letter, a little inconsequently perhaps —"Whatever happens to me in this World, I shall always love you."

From St. Catherine's Disraeli returned to Bretby. "My journey was not very successful," he told Lady Bradford, "for my train was always too late to fit in with Bradshaw, so I had to wait an hour at Stafford and at Lichfield"; and the quiet evening to which he looked forward at the end of the journey was not to be:

. . . they were congratulating me on having a quiet dinner (which by the by I wanted) . . . when lo and behold, as we were about to sit down to table Mr. Scott in an affected whisper audible to everybody, and looking very

pompous, announced a messenger from the Foreign Office on very urgent business. I was obliged to go out and found matters as he described . . . I read the Despatch and found it utterly impossible to reply to it off-hand; it required, however urgent, much deliberation. So I made up my mind to sleep on it and send a telegram for the moment. But then I had to telegraph in cypher and you know what that is from George Paget who was a whole evening over one line. I managed it at last and tried to return with a smiling and easy mien to my dinner. But hungry as I was, having touched nothing but my St. Catherine's sandwich, and that before noon, my appetite was nothing to the ravenous eyes of Lady A. who exhausted all her manœuvres to obtain an inkling of what had occurred. I had a good dinner all the same and indulged in some good claret, convincing myself that it was a wine favorable to judgment; then we had a rubber which I lost as usual, and my wits were so woolgathering that it was fortunate I did not revoke as I did do at Weston. I slept very well till five o'clock when I woke, but with my mind quite clear, and what at night had seemed difficulties were all removed. So I opened my shutters and wrote my Despatch in pencil, in bed. By the time my fire was lit it was done, and I had nothing left to do but to write it in ink with very few alterations; and the messenger was off by the very earliest train.

A heavy mail kept Disraeli in his room at Bretby on the morning of September 2nd; but he had a piece of news which would not wait and he scribbled it in a note to his hostess:

September 2nd, 1874

A piece of great social news!

Don't tell them directly, but make them guess a little—A member of the late Government, of high rank and great wealth, has gone over to the Holy Father!

Who is it?

No less a personage than the Marquess of Ripon, K.G.!!!

Shall not be able to come down to breakfast as bag very heavy, and if I don't work now I shall not get my walk with my dear companion.

D

CHAPTER VIII

September 1874

A BOUT OF SICKNESS

Early in September Disraeli was summoned by the Queen to Balmoral. He broke his journey first at Perth and then at St. Mary's Tower, the seat of Lord John Manners, where he found much to occupy him:

To Lady Bradford

September 7th, 1874

Lady John said to me as I arrived "You will find, I fear, plenty to do, and there is a telegram this moment arrived." I rashly replied, "Nothing will induce me to do any work of any kind during my visit." Little did I know what awaited me. The most troublesome business that has happened since we have been in office, the most difficult and vexatious. I would tell you if we were at Weston or Castle Bromwich, and will when we meet. But it is too long now and would be unintelligible. The telegram awaiting me was three pages in cypher and it is no slight affair to interpret these missives for one who is not an expert in the gay science. With your bright intelligence you could have helped me much. My table was crowded also with letters and I really felt almost for the first time disgusted with

affairs, when my glance caught your handwriting, and your few lines full of sympathy and kind thoughts acted like a balm and a talisman on me and converted a wearied and slightly disgusted man into one full of happiness and energy. However it was, and is, no trifling business; the telegraph has never ceased since I was here and a messenger has now arrived with a special box on his way to Abergeldie and Balmoral.

On this occasion it was Lady Chesterfield who was made his confidante:

St. Mary's Tower, Birnam, N.B.,
September 7th, 1874

Dearest friend,

Read enclosed, and then, sealing your letter with great care, send them to me at "Balmoral Castle." As you, and you alone, knew about the business, I thought it right that you should see the end. You often asked me whether I had heard from Lord Derby?

Since I received the enclosed the telegraph in cypher has been unceasingly working. A telegram, three pages long, in cypher arrived at St. Mary's Tower about an hour before I did yesterday. It is very hard work to decypher these productions for one who is not an expert in the secret—and there are mistakes made in the numbers which are very perplexing. All these cyphers are taken down at the office from the wire by a country girl! How can errors be avoided?

The enclosed came in a bag by mail and arrived at St. Mary's Tower on Sunday morning: the great telegram in cypher a few hours after.

This morning a long telegram in cypher came from Mr. Lumley, our Minister at Brussels, saying that General Horsford had left Brussels for Metz, that he had signed the protocol previous to his departure, and that Mr. Lumley knew that the Belgian Foreign Office had immediately telegraphed the fact to Jomini, the Russian President of the Congress. No doubt of that, and his triumph will be great.

You will admit this is rather a trial of temper; but it does not upset me as any unhappiness occurring to yourself would, or any little misunderstanding with Selina: for my brain is tolerably strong, but my heart is too soft.

I have been so busy that I could only get out yesterday for a few minutes, to see the outside of the house. It is a noble one; with many capacious chambers; as lofty as those at Belvoir; built of a very finely tinted stone, and a choice specimen of the castellated Scotch mansion with turricles and a main tower of pretension. The fault is, that it ought to stand in a park of some hundred acres, instead of a flower garden surrounded by villas.

To-day Lady John was to drive me about; but there is a Scotch mist and a gentleman, one of your friends, just arrived from the Foreign Office with endless boxes and Despatches, on his way to Abergeldie and Balmoral.

There is an article on the late Session and the position of the Government, in Blackwood's Magazine—worth reading; I bought it at Edinburgh.

I have another letter from the Queen, which would please you much.

Your affectionate

D

The country here is very fine green hills almost mountains, the valley of a fine river, the Tay, and splendid timber on its banks.

To Lady Bradford he gave a similar description of the scenery though he qualified it with a comment of obvious significance:

But Mabel is quite right; nothing satisfies me now but Windermere. It assumes to me now the aspect and hues of fairy-land, is lovely and mystical and delicate. I think of it as of a moonlit opera by Wagner, with the King of Bavaria paddling his own canoe and listening to the alternate charms of nymphs from starry isles.

And in spite of the pressure of work he gave much thought to plans for an early foregathering:

Lady Scarbrough has written to me to come to Sandbeck the 19th to meet some guests, and the Bradfords are mentioned among them. I have provisionally agreed to go to Dunrobin; but I would throw over fifty Dunrobins to pass only four and twenty hours under the same roof as yourself. What I want to know is whether it is a fact, or whether there is a strong probability of its being a fact, that "the Bradfords" will be at Sandbeck if I come there? Whether our good friend is likely to stay in any house so long as the dates commencing with Doncaster would imply? I could not come earlier as you know my embarrassments about Doncaster, and Lady Scarbrough assumes that I am at Mr. Montagu's for the race days. Pray let me hear from you

on this head and also as to Chillingham[1] which I have not yet answered.

Lady Bradford knew well how to provoke him and perhaps, despite her years, took an impish delight in doing so:

To Lady Bradford

Balmoral Castle,
September 10th, 1874, 3 o'clock.

Your letter dated yesterday has this instant arrived. I am at home; rather nursing, but I have got Jenner,[2] who says I have no fever and that I shall soon be right.

It will be a stupid letter, for the post goes off early, and I have much to do which is pressing.

My heart, not my temper, is hurt at your doubting my sincerity about meeting you at Sandbeck. It always seems to me that everybody is kinder to me than you are. I would have come to Sandbeck on Saturday, even if there had been a chance of your leaving it on that day. I would have run the risk for Monday. Now, I make another proposal. The Faery here is more than kind: she opens her heart to me on all subjects and shows me her most secret and most interesting correspondence. She asked me here for a week, but she sent to-day to say that she hoped I would not so limit my visit and that I would remain at least to the end of next week, and so on. My original week will be up on

[1] The seat of Lord Tankerville to which Disraeli had been invited in October. Before accepting he wished to know if Lady Bradford was to be of the party.

[2] Sir W. Jenner, a distinguished physician of the day.

Tuesday, the 15th, and I propose on Wednesday, the 16th, to find myself at Bretby, if you will be there and if you will, as I hope, not leave, under these circumstances, on the 19th. Let me hear from you as soon as you can upon this.

I shall try to write to the Master of ye Horse by this post, but I can scarcely guide my pen.

I will throw over Chillingham to-morrow, and Dunrobin, if I hear favorably from you.

Tell G. Paget I sent up his cypher, but have received no answer. He has a right to assume that he has baffled the experts—but it is possible that there are none of them in town. I think they would have sent me an answer at all events. If it comes, I will send it to you and you shall forward it to Lord George.

The Derbys dined here yesterday and with Princess Beatrice and Lady Churchill made up the 8. I sate between Lady D. and the Princess. She is not ill-looking; the reverse; rather like Princess Louise. I spoke to her once or twice, but she replied only in monosyllables; perhaps she is not out.

The Duchess is full of life—asked the Queen at dinner whether she had read "Lothair"? The Queen answered, I thought with happy promptitude, that she was the first person who had read it. Then the Duchess asked her Gracious Majesty whether she did not think Theodora a divine character; and the Queen looked a little perplexed and grave. It would have been embarrassing, had the Duchess not gone on rattling away and begun about Mr. Phebus and the "two Greek ladies," saying that for her part she would like to live in a Greek isle.

The business is very active here and I think I never had more boxes; but the Secretary of State being here simplifies

affairs. Lady Derby came over to see me to-day, as she thought nobody was taking care of me and fancied I was very ill last night. It must have its way. It incapacitates me from transacting business—and it is difficult to write to any except those I love.

D

In a letter to Lady Chesterfield written the day before, he had described his arrival at Balmoral:

Balmoral Castle,
September 9th, 1874

I arrived here yesterday at 6 o'clock, after travelling in an open carriage from Dunkeld, through sixty miles of the finest scenery in the Highlands. There was "nobody at home" when I arrived, and so I went at once to my room—where I found my table covered with boxes and papers: among them your dear letter; so it is only one post from Bretby to Balmoral, your letter of the 7th being delivered at 3 o'clock on the 8th. No letter from you has come, however, to-day. I wrote to you from St. Mary's Tower inclosing some curious letters. I found a box from Lord Derby with several letters on the same business, and one from himself. I enclose that; the others would make my packet too thick; and also one from Mr. Bourke, the Under Secretary of State, which arrived this afternoon. I should not have bored you with these; but as you knew, by an accident, the beginning you ought to know the end.

I dined with the Queen at 9 o'clock! It is too late. There were only the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and one or two courtiers. I sate next to the Duchess who sate

next to the Queen. The Duchess was most lively and broke through all the etiquette of courtly conversation. Even the Queen joined in her vivacity and evidently is much influenced by her. The Duchess had been picking mushrooms all the morning. This amused me and reminded me of all our labors; but they have no poachers here. The Duke came in late to dinner. He had been stalking and told me that he had traversed on his own legs that day, five and twenty miles.

I had a long conversation, after dinner, with the Queen. She spoke hardly of anything, but of the case of Lord Ripon. She wants to find out who was the artist who cooked the dish? But she has not succeeded. Don't you think Lady Carnarvon could help us on this head? The Queen seems to think it was neither Manning nor Capel. If Lord Granville were in England, he would tell her. She wondered what Mr. Gladstone thought of it. Pray find out the name of the *chef*.

Lord Derby called on me this morning. He walked over. They complain here they see little of him; he finds the society of Lady Derby so absorbing! They, the Derbys, continue to remain here notwithstanding the newspapers.

Your affectionate

D

A telegram came at dinner with George's death.[3]

Disraeli, impressed with the importance of first-hand knowledge of a country whose affairs bulked so large in the political controversies of the time, had planned a visit to Ireland:

[3] Lord George Manners.

Balmoral Castle,
September 10th, 1874

My dearest Lady C.,

Notwithstanding the death of Lady Mt Edgecumbe, the Duke of Abercorn holds to my Irish visit. According to his programme, which I have this day received, I ought to arrive there on the 17th October. In consequence of this, I shall give up my visits to Dunrobin and Chillingham and turn my steps southward as soon as I can.

My royal mistress is more than kind: she lavishes on me every possible attention, and having asked me originally to pay her a visit for a week, she wished me, if possible, to double that period: but I shall keep to my first arrangement.

Now, do you think, if I turned up at Bretby on the 16th. you could receive me for a day or two?

The Carnarvons will probably be with you and, from what I hear to-day, perhaps Selina; so you may have many guests. A *garret will do for me,* and if you give the master a garret you might spare one for his Secretary, for I want to see Montagu greatly on affairs of State.

But as I write with candor, you will answer me in the same vein, if it be not convenient.

Your finding the books was very curious!

The learned lord was Lyndhurst.

I have heard nothing about Northbrook, and as the appointment of his successor is in my gift, I think it probable that something would have reached me.

The weather here has been mild. I have hitherto felt no difference—but my travelling in an open carriage, though the air was balmy and sunny and my clothing warm, did not turn out very well, if it gave me the cold under which I

am rather suffering; but we have Sir W. Jenner here who pays me great attention.

Think of me always with the kindness I ever think of you, and then I shall be content.

Your affectionate

D

But the illness which he was disposed to dismiss too lightly was in the end to defeat his laudable object, and it has to be recorded that for all his good intentions, Disraeli never set foot in Ireland. The insidious nature of the attack which gout and advancing years were making upon his health, is apparent from the many references to growing indisposition which occur in his letters at this time:

To Lady Bradford

Balmoral Castle,
September 12th, 1874

. . . I have not been well here, and had it not been for Sir W. Jenner might have been very ill. All is ascribed to my posting in an open carriage from Dunkeld to Balmoral; but the day was delicious and I was warmly clothed and never apprehended danger. I felt queer on Wednesday, though I dined with the Queen on that day. Thursday Sir William kept me to my room. I have never left the Castle once. On Friday I paid Prince Leopold a visit, who wanted to see me, and later in the day the Queen sent for me and I had a very long and most interesting audience. She told me that Sir William had reported to her that I had no fever, and therefore she had sent for me; otherwise she would

have paid me a visit. She opened all her heart and mind to me and rose immensely in my intellectual estimation. Free from all shyness, she spoke with great animation and happy expression; showed not only perception, but discrimination of character, and was most interesting and amusing. She said I looked so well that she thought I could dine with her. But when Sir William came home from his drive with Prince Leopold and paid me his afternoon visit, he said the symptoms were not at all good; put me on a mustard poultice on the upper part of my back, gave me some other remedies, and said I must not think of dining or of leaving my room. The remedies have been most successful; an incipient congestion of the lung seems quite removed and he does not doubt of my being able to travel on Tuesday.

This morning the Queen paid me a visit in my bed-chamber. What do you think of that?

The Grand Duchess is in despair at not seeing me; she is reading Froude—and wanted to talk it over with me. The Derbys also came to see me to-day.

There is no truth in the newspaper story that the Queen has paid the Prince of Wales' debts. The Prince of Wales has no debts. I have much to tell you.

You will understand from all this that I am a sort of prisoner of State in the tower of a castle; royal servants come in and silently bring me my meals; a royal physician two or three times a day to feel my pulse, &c., and see whether I can possibly endure the tortures that await me. I am, in short, the man in the Iron masque: and when I think of Belgrave Square and Bretby and dear St. Catherine's and beloved Weston—and the bright beings who, there, seemed only to wish to make my life happy and enchanting,

I feel as if I were recalling dreamland, and rather dull.

From Balmoral Disraeli returned to Bretby where he was for some days laid up:

Bretby Park,
Monday, September 20th, 1874

I am too ill to write even to you. A severe attack of gout has been the culmination of my trials and though it has removed or, at least, greatly mitigated dangerous symptoms, it adds to my suffering and my prostration. The dear angel here is more than kindness; but that only makes me feel what an enormous outrage on her hospitality is the whole affair.

My man is not in London, nor, I believe is Gull; but we travel always with every remedy and material for attacks of gout and therefore, in that respect, I do not feel hopeless.

I sit in silence, quite unable to read! musing over the wondrous 12 months that have elapsed since this time last year. I have had at least, my dream and if my shattered energies never rally, which, considering that these attacks have been going on more or less for six months, is what I must be prepared for, I have, at any rate, reached the pinnacle of power and gauged the sweetest and deepest affections of ye heart.

Adieu!

D

Bretby Park,
September 23rd, 1874

I do not like to dwell on my own griefs when you have your own, with which too I so entirely sympathise. I will

hope that you have had better news from Willey and that I may yet, as we once planned and hoped, see in the flesh that dear, pensive face that never looked on me for nearly forty years, except with kindness.

Having all the remedies with us suited to all the conjunctures of the complaint, I resolved at once to put an end to the gout and I have succeeded, comparatively speaking. I could now cross Burton platform without its being telegraphed over the kingdom that the "Prime" was on his last legs. Such is the magic of colchicum. I certainly would not have had recourse to it, unless to obtain my instant return to town; but the Chatelaine does not at all agree with me in this respect, and when she enforces her views with commanding eloquence, when her eyes flash fire and she waves her little white hands, I can make no fight against her brilliant determination. Perhaps I should not have made a good one if I were well—but as it is, it is France before Bismarck!

To follow also your wishes, a medico is now sent for. They cannot tell me his name, but he is, like all Provincials, an oracle. My principal reason against calling him in before was, I felt sure he would keep me here. Now, he will encounter his task with all the remedies and prescriptions of Gull and Leggatt and Co., to contend with, and the effect upon me time only can reveal. I should say, however, that no inquest would be necessary. That would be one of the compensating consequences of delay.

Monty writes on Sunday from Taylor's and was going on Monday to Baronscourt, intending to leave it on Tuesday for London straight. If so, he will be in Downing Street to-day. He seems, as yet, to have done well.

The Chatelaine had written to him on Saturday to Taylor's and yesterday to Baronscourt. He may probably have received the first. She has telegraphed to him at Holyhead, Crewe and Downing Street, but no answer has yet arrived.

Last night, which brought his pouch from Downing Street, brought also a box from the Queen: an interesting letter. I meant to have said something about it, but I have over-estimated my strength.

There is also a letter from Duchess of Manchester to notice, and others—but I can no more. This is written on my back.

My kind remembrances to Bradford—and all.

Ever,

Your devoted,

D

The attack left Disraeli weak; but convalescence at Bretby was not without its compensations:

Bretby Park,
September 26th, 1874

A little line, to thank her for her letter of much delight. I have been out to-day, driven for half an hour by the Chatelaine, in the lustre of a summer atmosphere. . . . The line is in an old Elizabethan dramatist, Heywood, I think—it may be Webster, but I have no books at hand. "Writ on the red-leaved tablets of the heart" is the full and correct line.

The Carnarvons come to-day: but I do not appear at dinner. Indeed I am ashamed to say I was carried up and down stairs. Monty went out partridge shooting at noon:

then came in to meet the messenger and is now shooting again.

I think my two chief causes of complaint are gradually expiring—but my weakness is great. I think that Weston air would be very beneficial.

I wish, instead of this dull page, I could send you something as delightful as yourself.

D

Bretby Park,
September 28th, 1874

. . . My pale thoughts and tottering sentences are a poor offering to one whose vivid mind and airy and elastic phases give force to truth and grace to fancy . . . .

Monty found out last night in the *Daily News,* a review of the new (3rd) volume of Lord Palmerston's life edited by Evelyn Ashley from Lord Dalling's unfinished MS. There is a letter of dear Pam sending "Coningsby" to his brother, Sir W. Temple, at Naples, and Pam's remarks thereon—most interesting.

Bretby Park,
September 30th, 1874

Monty and I go to town on Friday and on Monday to Hughenden. I shall not give up my hope of paying you a visit to Weston: one must have a future, even if it be not realised. Do not be alarmed, however, at the possibility of my inflicting a valetudinarian guest on you. I will not propose to appear unless I am in what you call "force."

I know nothing about "Gussie's" illness, which distresses

me, and not only because I know it must distress you. I thought they were in the Engadine.

We are worried here by a mad lady, a Mrs. Berkeley who, it seems, has been writing letters to me for a long time of much affection and which my secretary very properly never troubled me with. At last I opened one myself, beginning "Beloved Premier" and in the evening she came down to Bretby to "nurse me"—"having more tenderness" than, it would appear, you have.

Carnarvon, Monty and all the men had gone to the function. Mr. Baum managed to get her to an inn near the collieries called the "Stanhope Arms" and said I would call in the morning—and this morning Monty went. She is cracked, but only on one subject. We have telegraphed to all her friends and the "guardian" is coming down tomorrow. But she will not move without my personal request. Monty reports her as attractive, very well-bred and like all mad people, very acute. What an incident!

I have not read Gladstone which I reserve till I have him in a complete state—but, judging from the articles, I should infer that he had fallen between two stools, or avoided the real difficulties which he proposed to himself to solve.

Yours,

D

By October 2nd Disraeli was well enough to travel, and we find him already looking keenly forward to a visit to Lady Bradford at Weston. "I shall be so glad to be at Weston again . . . I shall bring all the rough materials for the Cabinets down with me." And then an odd thought strikes him. Lord Bradford's horse Boscobel on which he

had lost money in the summer is about to run again—"Tell Bradford to put me on Boscobel, if he means to win. I will go as far as 100 shillings." But he did not allow his pleasure at the prospect of a visit to Weston to cause him to forget all that he owed to the kindness of Lady Chesterfield:

Bretby Park,
October 2nd, 1874

I cannot trust the parting voice to convey to you how much I feel all your kindness; and all the grace and unceasing charm, with which you made an invalid feel he was not a wearisome intruder.

Adieu! dear and darling friend!

I have no language to express to you my entire affection.

Your devoted,

D

On reaching London Disraeli sent for Sir William Gull; and on October 3rd reported the result to Lady Bradford. "He threw himself into the case and there could not be a diagnosis more complete, and, you will be happy to hear, more satisfactory." Mindful, perhaps, of the ease with which his correspondent was able to provoke him, he sought to return the compliment by playing upon her curiosity:

The night before I left Bretby, having made up all my arrangements, both as regards Downing Street and Whitehall, and Monty having posted up all the boxes and reduced the chaos of papers of a fortnight's gathering, into order—there came, almost at the witching hour, a messenger with a single box with "confidential and immediate" on it. The

messenger had brought it from Balmoral to London, expecting I had arrived there on Thursday, which I had intended, with Carnarvon. The messenger was told, if I were not in town the box must be instantly taken to me, wherever I might be.

This box will cost me more trouble than all the matters since I was Minister. I don't think, since Pandora's box, there ever was a more dangerous one. It occupied my thoughts all the journey and has engaged me ever since my arrival. You can ask me what it contained when we are walking in the woods of Weston—but shall I tell you when you enquire?

Yours ever,

D

Whatever the matter was, Disraeli took it seriously enough, for he referred to it again in a letter to Lady Chesterfield the next day: "I have just finished a very long letter to Balmoral, and I foresee the correspondence will not easily end. That box which arrived at Bretby on the eve of my departure will be as troublesome as Pandora's box."

In his letter to Lady Bradford of September 30th, he had told her that he had not read Mr. Gladstone. He now obtained a copy of the *Contemporary Review* in which the article to which he referred was to be found:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
October 5th, 1874

I have read G. with difficulty. He is a cumbrous writer. . . . He does not meet the great question which every in-

stant is becoming greater. All—at least all civilised beings —must be for "the beauty of holiness." No one stronger than myself. In ecclesiastical affairs I require order, taste, ceremony. But these are quite compatible with a sincere profession of the established religion of the country. What I object to is the introduction of a peculiar set of ceremonies which are avowedly symbolical of doctrines which the established church was instituted, and is supported, to refute and to repudiate. This is what the people of England are thinking of. His article is mere "leather and prunella."

Much more serious than Mr. Gladstone's article was the reported conversion of another prominent peer to the Church of Rome:

The defection of the Duke of Northumberland if true—and from my judgment of ye man I believe it—is a blow to the House of Lords round which the country, perplexed and alarmed, was prepared to rally. But Popish peers cannot be construed, by any sleight of words, into defenders of Church and State.

This was a matter which caused not only the Prime Minister, but the Queen, much anxiety. For the present, however, neither had anything more than rumor to go upon. "I hope the Duke of Northumberland is safe," Disraeli wrote to Lady Chesterfield on October 6th, "though I am always afraid about one who believes so much, and so much that is absurd!"

The rumour happily proved incorrect:

Hughenden Manor,
October 9th, 1874

Dearest Lady Ches.,

It is a great relief—this contradiction about the Duke of Northumberland. I confess I believed the rumor. The Duke of Argyle and the Percys who are staying with him at Inverary wrote to the Queen immediately to say that it was false. Her Majesty was greatly excited and telegraphed to me to write strongly to Lord Percy publicly to deny it. That would not have done much, as no one would have been convinced by anything less than a declaration under the Duke's hand. Thank God that had appeared before even I had received Her Majesty's wishes.

Disraeli had returned to Hughenden on October 5th for the first time since Whitsun; and memories of his Whitsuntide party flooded in upon him—"I have not been to Hughenden since you were here. I have been into your rooms and could scarcely persuade myself that they had been inhabited by the Lady of the Lake." And a letter from Lady Bradford overjoyed him—"Oh! that there had been quantities more to read! All the red boxes in the world and all the hurrying messengers should not, could not, have detained me from your interesting and charming letter. . . . The prospect of celebrating under your roof the anniversary of an event which has given so much form and color to my life as my visit to Weston, is entrancing . . . I don't know yet about Monty . . . I know he is embarrassed and involved in domestic imbroglios, which quite enrage me." The

BRETBY PARK AS IT WAS IN THE 'SEVENTIES

faithful Monty did, indeed, appear to be much harassed by domestic duties. "I am getting on," Disraeli wrote to Lady Chesterfield on the 9th, "yesterday I walked out three times, but only for short periods." But he was alone:

Monty left me yesterday morning with a half promise that he will return to-night. He has so many domestic cares and duties; always a sister to take to a doctor, or nephews to take to school, or nieces to put in a convent. It is his only fault and he ought to be pitied for it not blamed. But I hate being alone when I am still weakish, and I have not as yet that vigor of mind that peoples solitude.

Disraeli's intended visit to Weston was prevented by the death of Lord Forester early in October, and he remained at Hughenden until he returned to London for the autumn Cabinets in November. "I am an eremite," he wrote, "see nobody, and literally, for eight and forty hours have not opened my lips." Of work there was always plenty—"My life itself is not dull," he told Lady Bradford, "because business is very stirring and increases daily." For recreation he fell back upon his pen, filling letters to each of the two sisters with his fleeting thoughts and sentiments and with odd patchworks of news. "There is little fear of his forgetting a certain person," he wrote to Lady Bradford on October 9th, "for he can truly say he passes his life in trying to govern the country and thinking of her." And he went on to tell her what he thought of a recent review of his collected works:

He was disappointed by the review in the *Fortnightly*. Some sharp criticism he expected, for his views, political, religious, or historical, are not their views; but he expected vigor and a comprehensive glance. It does not appear to him to be a malicious so much as a stupid review; of a writer with ample literary culture, but with no imagination and of a contracted ken. It is a number of desultory observations without any leading principles to guide the opinions, and form the taste of the reader. The fact—not an ordinary one—that he was reviewing works which spread over nearly half a century seems never to have occurred to him . . . I expected from the *Fortnightly* something more vigorous and commanding.

This lack of discernment rankled for he returned to the subject the next day:

Monty hates the review more than you do if possible. I continue to think that its characteristic is stupidity. When a critic remarks that it is difficult to know whether an author is in earnest, or in jest, I think it safe to hold the critic is a blockhead. However, I was amused by observing that my old and kind friend the *Spectator* says the praise of the *Fortnightly* is unreasonable and excessive. What my works are I will not stop to consider. I will be content to remember what Mr. Beckford said of them—and the best were not then, perhaps written—that at any rate they are unlike any one else's. I think I have some clear descriptive power which is not very common, and dramatic propriety which is rarer; and, perhaps, they are a picture of an age when opinions on great subjects were shaken to the centre

and the public mind, if not involved in anarchy, was at least in sight of it. All this too, I hope, in a style which is not entirely void of grace and music.

CHAPTER IX

October–November 1874

A UNITED CABINET

With the arrival of October, the comparative leisure of August and September came to an end; and it was a great blow to Disraeli that just as the pressure of work began to make itself felt again, he should have been deprived of the services of Monty Corry. "Monty leaves me on Saturday and for some time—perhaps, and probably, a month," he told Lady Chesterfield on October 13th. "This is terrible, as the busy time has commenced." And he returned to the matter in a letter to the same correspondent the next day. "Yesterday a second messenger arrived with a box from Balmoral and we had to telegraph in cypher, which Monty does very ably. But he will soon leave me and I dread this addition to my labor." But preoccupied though he was by his own grievances, he did not forget the sorrow caused to his two friends by the death of their brother; and he sought to distract them by keeping them supplied with interesting or amusing scraps of news—"Derby's private correspondence from our Foreign Ministers," he told Lady Bradford on October 10th, "which he forwards to me daily, or almost daily, have thrown no authentic light yet on the Arnim incident." A few days later he had items of social

interest to communicate. The Duke of Abercorn, he told Lady Chesterfield, was to be Grand Master of the Irish Freemasons; but he kept a more interesting piece of news for Lady Bradford:

The Prince of Wales *will* go to France to shoot with two legitimist *Ducs* who are in avowed opposition to the Government of the country . . . His excuse is that he is not Prince of Wales, but Earl of Chester!

This display of independence on the part of the heir to the throne of Great Britain seems to have caused Disraeli some anxious moments; and two days later he wrote—"There is a terrible feeling at Head Quarters about the visit to Paris. I am greatly plagued; but all this must be told when we meet." Lady Chesterfield seems to have mentioned a report which had reached her that Gibraltar was to be given up, an item of news which evoked a sarcastic reply —"The rest of the Cabinet have kept the giving up of Gibraltar from me. Who is to take it? For I see, on referring to your letter, that we are to be forced to surrender it. I should think Don Carlos, as he has always been very fortunate in his sieges." In his letter to Lady Bradford on October 16th, he remarked—"Bismarck begins now to get active and one's colleagues write letters to know what is to be done?" In his letter to Lady Chesterfield of the same date he was rather more explicit:

I am not at all nervous about Spain which is all rhodomontade. The Spaniards count on Bismarck uphold-

ing them, which he will do to a certain extent; but not to a perilous one. He will not send them fleets or armies; but he will use the Serrano Government to curb and annoy the Ultramontane party in Europe.

At the Colonial Office Lord Carnarvon was displaying considerable activity—"I have just telegraphed to Carnarvon," he told Lady Bradford on the 18th. "He seems very busy annexing provinces to the Empire." And to Lady Chesterfield he wrote on the 20th—"I will write to Highclere [1] however busy I may be. Carnarvon seems to be distinguishing himself. All great statesmen neglect their affairs or those of the public—and the members of the present Cabinet must devote themselves to the Nation." On October 21st, Disraeli was the recipient of a small gift from Lady Bradford:

Hughenden Manor,
October 21st, 1874

The dear Aneroid has come and something dearer! I am inexpressibly pleased, gratified and grateful—and to receive some words from you on a day when the post seemed to bring none. I don't think we can say your presents have been unfortunate, I would think the reverse. The Aneroid is quite safe; I have spent the morning in sketching an important State paper with that darling little pencil, which has never left me for a moment and which begins to give signs that its powers are exhausting. That

[1] Lord Carnarvon's seat in Hampshire where Lady Chesterfield was about to pay her son-in-law a visit.

LADY EVELYN STANHOPE, DAUGHTER OF LADY CHESTERFIELD AND WIFE OF LORD CARNARVON

From a painting by Landseer

shows how much, and how often, it has been used—and even at this very moment, the bright soul of the house[2] is singing and telling me what a moment of rapture this has been to his master, that has brought him news so unexpected and so delightful. Monty says it never sings without making him think of you. I won't say that; for I do not think you are ever absent from my consciousness for an instant—but it brings up a crowd of associations; Weston and my first visit and its week of grace and beauty . . .

His next few letters were full of news of the Court and of the offence caused by the publication of Greville's "Mémoires":

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
October 23rd, 1874

Yes! The Prince answered my letter: a charming letter, but evading all the points. However it ended by both parties being pleased with me. So I hope to hear no more of it. Other things have turned up since. There is no repose. The court is a Department in itself.

However, the Ministry are in great favor. The adieu of the Queen after the Council to the Duke of Richmond, was—"I wish you to remain in as long as you possibly can." He had quickness enough to reply—"That is exactly, Madam, what I and my colleagues intend to do."

This letter *really* must be for your own eyes and ears.

[2] A reference to the cuckoo clock which Lady Bradford had sent him the year before.

I take walks every day and the weather is delicious. But I have not been satisfied about myself and sent for Leggatt, my own man. He came down to-day; but he agrees with Jenner and Gull, that all is organically right and that all that is necessary and can be done is to baffle the gouty poison in one's blood, which may be done to a great degree.

Your affectionate

D

Hughenden Manor,
October 26th, 1874

Dearest of friends,

You have written me a charming letter, and deserve a happier reply than you can expect from a hermit.

I could not avail myself of Lady Carnarvon's kind invitation for the 30th, because on the 31st I go to town, having to meet many persons and do many things, before the meetings of the Cabinet commencing on the 10th. The Lord Chancellor also arrives in town on the 31st and will call on me the following day.

I had great difficulty in finding a Minister for Balmoral, in succession to the Lord Chancellor. Some could not go, some would not; in fact, the Cabinet struck. But it was necessary to exercise authority and all has been well arranged, and the Duke of Richmond will be in attendance on the Queen from the 2nd to the 9th November.

I have not seen Charles Greville's book, but have read a good deal of it. I think it a social outrage, and I am amused at its being the production of a man who was always talking about what he called "perfect gentlemen."

The Queen, and naturally, is wonderfully annoyed and indignant about this publication.

I was very intimate with Charles Greville during the latter years of his life, and when I drew the character of Sir Robert Peel (which I think is a just and, I know, is a most impartial one) in the life of George Bentinck, Greville, who deigned not to be displeased with it, told me one day—I suppose as a reward—that he had also drawn the character of Peel and that I should have the privilege of reading it: so he opened a Cabinet and gave me the sacred volume, which I bore with mine own hands from Bruton Street to Grosvenor Gate.

Judging from that MS. volume which I read, I thought that when he was not scandalous, he was prolix and prosy; nor do I think when this portion of his "Mémoires" is published, he will be recognised by posterity as a literary Vandyke. Greville was the vainest being—I don't merely say man—that I ever knew, and I have read Cicero and was intimate with Lytton Bulwer.

I am most amused about Colenso. Tell me all about him and the guests.

What I am suffering from is not gout, but an incipient attack in my throat, though I have no doubt gout is at the bottom of it. I think we shall manage it: only it alarmed me after all that had occurred and remembering all that is to occur. It is not exactly right for me to be here in the fall of the leaf, being a very sylvan place. But it is very easy to recommend persons to go to Buxton and Brighton; but I require comfort and comforts which I can't find at hotels, and the absence of which quite counteracts the superior atmosphere. London is however home; and the few

leaves to be found there have long fallen. So I must bid farewell to my mighty beeches brown with impending doom and the golden limes, showering in a sou-wester, their amber floods and the horse chestnuts rattling with their beautiful, but useless, fruit. All will be forgotten in a few days, like a dream—but you I shall never forget and never cease to love!

D

I am highly pleased with what Carnarvon has done and have told him so by this post.

On the eve of his departure for London Disraeli became uneasy about his health. "In an hour," he told Lady Bradford on October 28th, "Leggatt comes to see me again as I can't go to London until Saturday and am not at all easy about myself." He hoped, however, that there might be no real cause for alarm:

All may go right. If it does my future is not without some prospect of happiness, for I hope after the Cabinets that I may pay you a visit at Weston, and yesterday brought me an invitation to meet you at Ingestre. I shall accept it notwithstanding the memory of Longleat. I don't think Bradford will do the same thing twice in the same year. True, Shrewsbury is not even a Marquis—but then he has asked me to make him a Duke, dear funny fellow!

In his letter to Lady Chesterfield he gave additional details of his symptoms:

Hughenden Manor,
October 28th, 1874

Your letter is most amusing, dear, darling friend, and I make you a sad, dull return. But this is not a letter; only a bulletin. My messenger has just arrived with the boxes and all the posts—your letter among them which he brings from Wycombe (2nd post).

What I am suffering from seems to me, what Bradford was suffering from last year. It is a new feature in my case—but rather frightens me as it is not compatible with remaining leader of the House of Commons. I do not cough; in the day never, but towards night can't breathe and suffer much at night.

Leggatt (to whom I telegraphed this morning) comes to me in half an hour—and I will write you another line, if there be anything worth saying about myself, by a later post.

I am
Your ever affectionate
D

Carnarvon will be the hero of the day. Since I wrote to him he has conquered islands! I go to town, at all events on Saturday.

Hughenden Manor,
October 28th, 1874

I thought she would like to know that Leggatt takes a very sanguine view of the state of affairs—and he is a cold, unsympathising and uncheering man, so his sanguineness is worth something.

It is not a new complaint, but the old enemy in an inconvenient, but far from serious form. And he believes

will speedily disappear. General health good—much better than last year. Only I must tell you, I go up to town on Friday to please him and his remedial schemes, and, therefore, if you are so kind as to write to me on that day, direct to Whitehall Gardens.

Adieu!

D

After leaving Hughenden at the end of October, Disraeli spent a troubled five weeks in London. His health showed little sign of improvement and the work of the autumn Cabinets was rendered doubly onerous by serious indisposition. "I arrived here yesterday at half past six," he wrote to Lady Bradford from Whitehall Gardens on October 31st, "and saw Leggatt at seven. He won't let me go out of the house, but persists I shall get alright and speedily. All I want is to show on Lord Mayor's Day—or else it will be worse than the absence of Gog and Magog. If Gog is not there, who is to be Magog?" Nevertheless he did not allow his confinement in the house to impede the stream of business:

A terrible, busy day and I steal away from the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Secretary on a false pretence, but really to scribble this rapid line to you and to thank you for your letters which are my only consolation—far exceeding in the pleasures they confer, that afforded by one that came this morning dated Newmarket and asking me to Deene, and begging me if in town to call on her,[3] or let her call on me next Tuesday! I think it must be written for a wager . . .

Even when work was at its heaviest, time could always

[3] Lady Cardigan, a conspicuous figure on the race-course in those days.

be found to convey little items of news to Lady Bradford. "I had a rather interesting letter from the Duke of Edinburgh to-day," he wrote on November 2nd; "I think I will send it to you and the letter from his brother which arrived from Stockholm. They may amuse a moment." And in the same letter—"I think Winchelsea's verses about Greville in this morning's *Post* very happy. There has been nothing so good since Lutrell. I have written him a line to tell him so." The stir created by the "Mémoires" had not subsided. "The Queen is very indignant about the G. 'Mémoires,' he told Lady Chesterfield. "Her Majesty says 'they degrade Royalty.' No one would like their uncles to be so spoken of—particularly her immediate predecessor William 4th. I think she is right. However if you are amused that is some compensation." Before he closed his letter of November 2nd to Lady Bradford, two other scraps of news occurred to him. One concerned an appointment—"I have made the Marquess of Drogheda Lord Lieutenant of Kildare *vice* the Duke of Leinster. This will please Miladi." The other he had gathered from his servant —"Mr. Bayly the poulterer told Mr. Baum that though they had been, of course, very dull in the recess, still they had had some good foreign orders. For instance an order for 500 pheasants from the Duke of Rochefoucald-Bisaccia! Very difficult to execute in the time. Sent His Grace twenty short!" Letters in this happy conversational tone were always welcomed by their recipient. But his enforced solitude gave rise to morbid meditation, and then his pen would travel uncontrolled across the paper:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 3rd, 1874

I was very selfish in complaining of your two days' silence —and it was unhappy and ungracious to do so in my telegram. I ought to have remembered only how kind you are in writing to me so frequently and so regularly. I would try to excuse myself by asking you to remember that I am not only in loneliness, but in captivity; and the most insensible, under such circumstances, will yearn for those they love. Unhappily, I am not insensible. Your letters to me are like manna in the wilderness: when I think how little I see of the person I most think of, it makes me not only sad, but sometimes savage. You do not seem to share this feeling, or, at least, in no great degree, which does not add to my consolation.

I am sorry your sister is coming to town. She will arrive when I am absorbed with affairs and will apparently be neglected, and will probably think so. This will add to my annoyances; for I have a great regard for her—not only because she is your sister and a tie between us, but because she has many charming qualities. But when you have the government of a country on your shoulders, to love a person and to be in love with a person, makes all the difference. In the first case, everything that distracts your mind from your great purpose weakens and wearies you. In the second instance, the difficulty of seeing your beloved, or communicating with her, only animates and excites you. I have devised schemes of seeing or writing to you in the midst of stately

councils, and the thought and memory of you, instead of being an obstacle has been an inspiration.

You said in one of your letters that I complained that you did not appreciate me. Never! Such a remark, on my part, would have been in the highest degree conceited and coxcombical. What I said was, you did not appreciate my love —that is to say you did not justly estimate either its fervor or its depth.

D

Before there was time for him to receive a reply he had written again in cheerful mood:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 4th, 1874

Your delightful letter reached me this morning. I was in hopes I might have sent you a good account of myself to-day, but I am disappointed. I am going, quite against my own wish, to call in Dr. Andrew Clarke of Cavendish Square, who is said to be an oracle on bronchial affections. This distresses me, for I always find a new hand only begins again and generally arrives at the same goal as his predecessors. But God is great . . .

Lord John Manners called to-day, but I would not see him. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is more than sanguine about his finance. It will be a great triumph for the Government, that conceited and odious Childers having announced that new taxes were inevitable!

Everything in every quarter is flourishing, except the chief. He is rather downhearted, but he adores you.

D

The letter of November 3rd, however, brought the inevitable reply, and Disraeli was plunged once more into the depths of woe:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 7th, 1874

No stress of business could ever have prevented my writing to you. But your letter of the 4th seemed to me so unkind in many ways, that I felt as if I could never write another letter again. I will say no more on that head, for I have not energy to express myself, and had I, it would not be to reproach you. I wish only to remember of you all that has rendered my life delightful and interesting.

I am sadly disappointed again at your not coming to town. I read that in a penal light. I have been very ill. The new Doctor never came and fortunately, for he was not wanted. My complaint has disappeared, but my debility exceeds description.

D

Reflection modified his gloom:

10 Downing Street,
Half past 5, November 10th, 1894

A line to tell her the Cabinet is over and there is to be another on Thursday; but I doubt whether they will last another week. Nothing can be more satisfactory.

He sent a telegram this morning, the moment he woke and found he was pretty well. Shall he ever see her again? That is a thought that seems never to occur to her.

Adio!

He is pretty well; voice quite cured; only very weak.

As a matter of fact he was far from well. "I went out for the first time at 2 o'clock," he told Lady Chesterfield on November 7th, "to execute a commission for my royal mistress, but did not get out of my brougham. Then I drove about the streets for half an hour, to accustom myself to the sight and noise of people, and then I returned home, but so prostrate and exhausted that it was impossible for me to move again." Lady Chesterfield sent him delicacies from Bretby, and he expressed his gratitude with characteristic exuberance:

10 Downing Street,
November 7th, 1874

. . . My cook insisted on my having your turkey for luncheon to-day (my principal meal). I protested your injunctions, but was disregarded. She said it was quite right and a young one. The result—perfection! I never in my life tasted anything so complete, so tender and so succulent! It really seemed to bring back my appetite. And it is a food you can live on in all forms; delicious cold; fascinating minced; and when boiled, fit for Godlike suppers!

And again on November 8th:

I write amid roses and violets; and you are not only the Goddess Flora, but Pomona also; for they entered my room last evening, with a procession of fruits that ought to have been painted by Paolo Veronese. It delighted me to think they were the offering of one I so much love.

Disraeli's health varied from day to day and he kept both sisters regularly informed. "A very good night; and all

things very well," he wrote on November 10th. But two days later he was less cheerful: "I am very—but not seriously —indisposed; but to the Cabinet I *must* go at 3 o'clock. I am only just up." Politically all went well, and later the same day he wrote Lady Bradford an account of his successes:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 12th, 18744

The Cabinet just over; very successful.

I was so poorly that, once I had almost decided to hold it here. But all went well. I was determined to face at once the "Endowed School" difficulty; but no one could behave better than Hardy and Salisbury upon it. There is not now, as Derby said, a single rock ahead.

I wish I were well enough to write you a long and agreeable letter, but I am very poorly indeed, but not seriously—and have got to write at length to the Faery. Nevertheless, I could not refrain from sending you this line and to assure you of what I am sure you believe—that you are never absent from my thoughts.

I can't help being very nervous about Wenlock, though I have much confidence in Bradford's judgment.

Your letter, so kind, was most refreshing to me this morning.

I only rose for the Cabinet, but Derby has lent me "Greville."

Yours ever,

D

Is it not too bad of Lady John Manners? And it nearly happened in this house.

So smoothly did matters go, that by the middle of the month the last of the autumn Cabinets was already in sight:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
November 14th, 1874

Our Cabinet is over and we shall not meet again until Tuesday; but that may be our last; another one on Wednesday certainly will be. So there is nearly an end of this batch of labors. Nothing could have been more satisfactory. I never knew a body of men more united and better drilled. We have fixed for Tuesday in order to have Beach over on Irish affairs.

In the country things went equally well, and Disraeli's fear for the result of the by-election at Wenlock proved groundless:

I must heartily congratulate you on the family triumph; Gladstone's letter made it a party one. I heard the result of the election last night a little before 9 o'clock by a Broseley telegram from Orlando. Bradford ought to triumph as Gerard Noel yesterday said it was hopeless.

On the 16th he had further successes to record:

I have just heard that I have been re-elected Lord Rector for the University of Glasgow by a large majority. This is the first re-election that ever occurred there. So I shall have a reign, if I live, of eight years. Less than fifteen years ago

they put me up and I was beaten by some idiotic Scotch noble, whose very name I cannot recall. There are many amusing contrasts of this kind in my life; none more so than that revealed in G.'s "Mémoires" where it appears that George Bentinck in 1834 kept me out of Parliament, to become twelve years afterwards my devoted friend and colleague.

On the following day it was the trials of one who has the dispensing of honours and rewards that formed the half-humorous subject of a letter:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
November 17th, 1874

I forgot to tell you in my last stupid letter that the person who had asked for the Clerkship for Mr. Maude, was the Faery! Of course I could not refuse her that; but I never mentioned the matter as the vacancy had not been declared, and it was very indiscreet of Mr. Maude who, I believe, was apprised of the Queen's wishes by Lady Ely, to mention the matter at present. But nobody is discreet except you.

There are difficulties in Mr. Maude's case which might perhaps have been avoided, had he been silent. And as you are so discreet, now for a secret. Burghley has just written up that he resigns his post, Captain of the Pensioners, Beefeaters or something. His honor, he feels, demands it. He had been brooding over his honor since the spring. However, I have taken him at his word and the place is vacant. It is a good one. To whom shall we give it? My impression is, but I should like to hear from you about it, to Lord

Shrewsbury. He has been most faithful and is most disaffected. Certainly, when the Government was formed, he wrote me a letter to apprise me that, though wanting a great deal, he would not take a place in the Household (except, I suppose, Master of ye Horse); but, then, he was unusually mad and wanted me to make him Duke of Shrewsbury—a revival of the title once in the Talbots. But affairs are much changed since then. The Government is very strong and I fancy the Shrewsburys, particularly my lady, rather hungry. I fancy they would like to come into the feast. If so, I should have provided for one I wish to oblige and who had claims like Londonderry, whom I quieted with the St. Patrick. You remember Burghley's mess in the spring with Lord Hertford. This is it broke out again. Your great—no, greatest—friend, General McDonald, was of use to me then in it. Burghley is not offended with the Government and certainly not with me, for he has asked me to Burghley and to give the day that he may make a party worthy of the occasion. I would sooner give up *my* place, than go there, though B. himself is, *au fond,* a good fellow, but his wife to me is worse than Hecate, though handsomer.

Lord Kinnoull, who addresses me, "Dear Mr. D.," though he has not the honor of my personal acquaintance, requests me to *promise* that he shall have the next vacant Thistle. I rejoined that there was no vacancy in the Order at present and that I deferred, until one occurred, to consider the course most advantageous for the public interests, &c. &c.

Adieu!

D

The Cabinet just over. All right. Next (I hope last) on Tuesday.

CHAPTER X

November–December 1874

CONVALESCING AT BOURNEMOUTH

With the end of the Cabinets, Disraeli found himself in difficulty about his plans. His doctors urged him to go to the seaside. Though he was anxious to leave London he disliked the prospect of life in an hotel, and he poured out his trouble to Lady Bradford:

10 Downing Street,
November 18th, 1874

I went out to-day for the first time since my arrival in London at the end of October; for going over the way in a close carriage and wrapped up in a leopard skin scarcely can count as an egress.

I went to Buckingham Palace and wrote down my name in quite a library of books; one for the Empress, one for her children, one for Alexis whom I know, and another for another Grand Duke whom I don't know. Then to Gloucester House, the same. Then I returned two visits of the Duchess of Sutherland and called upon the affectionate Lady Derby, who, I observe, watches my illness with intense interest and who was not at home.

My medico says I must get out of London as soon after the Cabinets as I can and that with change of air, &c., I shall be in great health.

The Cabinets will certainly close this week; but my leaving town depends upon the Faery, who is capricious rather about her Council—whether it shall be before or after the Christening.[1] So I have written to Lady Ely on this, and should not be surprised if the Faery saw me on her arrival and freed me from both Council and Christening.

You misapprehended me about Bradford's letter. I did not mean in any way to complain. Only I thought from what you wrote, you assumed it was about my coming to Weston: it was not about that, but a triviality.

My medico talks of my going to the seaside and all that sort of thing, which is nonsense. I have tried this more than once without effect. There is great discomfort for a person like me in an hotel life—forced to order and eat dinners and drink wines and live in rooms like barracks, and no comforts and accommodations. It is horrid and would be still worse without Monty, whose presence has always mitigated these horrors. Besides there is something in my case which physicians know nothing about and could not comprehend. My heart yearns for the presence of those I love, and even Favonian breezes and Ausonian suns have little charms without their talismanic presence. But these, I fear, are feelings of a "lonely being."

I believe the Christening is Monday next! I have had no invitation and heard nothing of it—still I feel that next week, I could or shall be free, and am wishing that I had the wings of a dove and could . . .

D

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[1] Of Prince Alfred, eldest son of the Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria's second son.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 19th, 1874

I write to you early, as the Cabinet and other business will probably entirely engage me about post time.

I heard from the Faery this morning; two letters in one box; one about affairs and the other my health. She seems to assume that I know about the arrangements of the Court, of which I know nothing and, indeed, nobody else.

It seems that in consequence of the health of the Empress the Christening is not to be at Windsor, but at Buckingham Palace and on Monday! This the Faery does not like at all, or anything else, I think. She is rather cross. She says—"The Queen leaves this—alas! on the 20th!" So she will only get to Windsor on Saturday morning. She wants to see me there; but does not say when. I telegraphed to Balmoral and think it not unlikely she will see me the day she arrives.

The result is that I shall be prepared to go out of town early next week—and where shall I go to? That depends upon you. I await your orders and instructions.

I shall not be able to write to your dear companion, so you must give her my love.

Yours,

D

All hope of his paying a visit to Weston was shattered by a further attack of gout. "The Queen," he told Lady Chesterfield, "is strong for Bournemouth; seven weeks of it I ought to have, she says. I hate Bournemouth and every other place—and almost every other person. I will except Bretby and you." Nevertheless it was to Bournemouth that

he was at last persuaded to go. "When I can move," he wrote to Lady Bradford on November 23rd, "I am going to Bournemouth—the Bath Hotel—some rooms on the first floor, I hope pretty good as Rothschilds have them now. I called in Jenner on Saturday, suffering much in my chest—I believe from the fogs which have been very bad here. He insisted on Bournemouth." He was grievously depressed:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
December 1st, 1874

Amid my daily reveries and night dreams, it seemed to me I had only one purpose—to write to you and try to convey to you some conclusions at which I had arrived as to this strange illness, which has harassed me, more or less, for nine months and now has reached its climax. But when I take up my pencil (your pencil), my mind deserts me and I am utterly incapable of expressing thought or feeling, when, only a moment before, the thoughts seemed so deep and the feelings so just and vivid.

But I can be silent no more, if I write only to thank you for your letters. They have for me an ineffable charm; being both gay and affectionate—like your own happy disposition. Mine have been different; unreasonable and morose, exacting, discontented. I feel all this now—I will not defend them—I would rather leave their vindication to your seraphic idiosyncrasy.

What is exactly to become of me, I don't know. Whether

I can rally, must be doubtful. To get out of this *repaire* is a necessity, but how I can bear travelling for hours when writing this makes me fall exhausted on my pillow, I cannot comprehend.

D

His letters during his last few days in London were full of gloom lit up but rarely by an occasional flash of humour. "The Cabinets," he told Lady Chesterfield on November 21st, "are over, and during the whole series—five or six—Lord Derby, who sate on my left hand, never ceased blowing his nose, literally snorting like a hippopotamus. I did not like asking after his cold after the first day, lest he might think the enquiry ironical." The royal christening provided a story at the expense of the same statesman—"At the Christening, the royal infant was brought up to be shown to Lord Derby, among others, he being the only Cabinet Minister present. He gave a snort, started with apparent disgust, and turned his back on the royal babe!" But the following extract is more typical of his letters at this time—"I write in bed. If I am silent do not misinterpret me; but long suffering and exhaustion and some other things have done their work on me, and I am prostrate both in mind and body. My spring is gone." The journey to Bournemouth was at length accomplished; but Disraeli's first experience of the place was not one whit better than his expectation of it. He was dispirited and lacked distraction and spent his time writing long letters to his two friends:

CONVALESCING AT BOURNEMOUTH

To Lady Bradford

Bournemouth,
December 6th, 1874

Your packet[2] reached me last night and greatly touched me. Their brothers are still looking well, notwithstanding their arduous service, for I can truly say, they have rarely been off my hands for the last six weeks, and I have even sometimes slept in them. But though I welcomed the newcomers with tenderness, I cannot say it was with joy. Their donor is one whose sympathy, which I sometimes believe I possess, I value above all possessions, and yet I never see her! This year, too, the disappointment is unusually acute, as there appeared to be so many prospects of our meeting: at Weston, at Ingestre, at the Rosslyns', and afterwards at Crichel. All this, followed by a London season, ought to have satisfied the most unreasonable; but it has vanished like a mirage. It is impossible not to be depressed after such disappointments and I do not find that distraction in great affairs, which you read of in books as a specific for the anxieties of the heart.

I got here on Friday: they were anxious that I should seize the first day without frost for the journey. I can't say I bore it well. I arrived here sad and wearied, and every disagreeable feeling was aggravated by all the accessories of my hotel welcome, than which nothing could be more uncomfortable and more uncivilised. The arrival of Monty was for a moment cheering: we have brisked up things a little, have hired a decent sofa, and are promised some additional rooms. But he leaves me to-morrow.

[2] Containing muffetees knitted for him by Lady Bradford.

It is most unfortunate, as the mere routine transaction of business is very great and I have no one to assist me. Of the other two secretaries, one is a formalist always asking for instructions, and the other, from my long and frequent illnesses, I have never seen.

I detest this place—it is a large overgrown watering place, almost as bad as Torquay. I had expected something small and secluded; a bay with wooded shores. Notwithstanding the total absence of all comfort and convenience in my hotel, and the frightful food which they furnish, I am beginning to like my dwelling-place, because it is not in the town and I can step, as it were, from the garden to the cliff where I find no one.

Yesterday was a soft sunny day, Hesperian, and I took my first walk for many weeks, with Monty's arm, and afterwards a short drive.

On returning home I found many cards on my table, and among them the names of some "old friends." This makes me tremble and acutely feel that I have made a great mistake in coming here.

Lord Howe told Monty that he had prevented a brass band and the Conservative party, walking two by two, meeting me at the station. I hope never to find myself at that station again and mean to escape, like Gambetta, in a balloon.

There is also a painful controversy raging in the town, as to the Doctor I am to consult. I have received on this subject a passionate epistle, of many pages, from Crichel; but it is almost as illegible as a Babylonian brick. I thought I had come here to get rid of Doctors, or at least we might have them down from London, as we do our fish.

The Lord Chancellor arrived last night. He was most earnest that I should have been his guest, and could give me a complete and independent suite in his very capacious mansion. He seemed hurt at my refusing his offers; but in my drive yesterday I passed his lordly pile which appears to be still unfinished, so any fires would have been the first lit in his steaming walls. What an Irish invitation, to be the guest of a man, whose house is not yet built.

I don't know how to pay the people of the hotel adequately. I do not drink wine and therefore I cannot order their choice and costly vintages. This would have been the use of Monty. And the reputation of the establishment for bad food and all the miseries of the season is so extensively spread, that my friends do nothing but send me provisions. Yesterday arrived bread, butter, and turkeys from Bretby, and twenty pheasants from the Prince of Wales and this morning, Baron Rothschild, whose son had my rooms and knows all about it, informs me that they were in the habit of sending a weekly hamper from Gunnersbury, and requesting permission to continue the custom which will begin to-morrow. What am I to do, and what a mistake not to have gone quietly to Hughenden where Mrs. Drury would have fed or starved me, as Nature prompted, and I might have sipped a little cognac and water without being denounced as a screw!

I hope all are well with you. This is a stupid letter and I am stupid and my epistolary powers have reached their lees.

D

To Lady Chesterfield

Bournemouth,
December 9th, 1874

I hope you made a good journey and that you are well again. I cannot bear to hear you are ailing, as you always seem to me the model of health and graceful energy. I hope to hear, also, that Lady Carnarvon continues better. Pray remember me to her most kindly.

Monday was a day of delight here. The cliff was like the Corniche: so soft and sunny: the Isle of Wight looming not very far; and, on each side, a bay-like coast. But ever since then we have had a gale of wind, our old friend the So-wester; the white breakers quite fierce in the quiet bay and only the bending pines capable of withstanding the storm.

I will say nothing of the sanitary influences of this place until I have been here a week; I am sure under that time one can arrive at no sound conclusion. The ridiculous paragraphs in the papers about me would make Bournemouth another pool of Bethesda; for it seems, in four and twenty hours, I have been miraculously cured!

The Dowager of Exeter is here and sends me religious books and has already named two clergymen to me. I knew her in her greater fortunes and in my lesser and she was kind to me, so I don't like to be short or rude with her; but I am greatly annoyed. I don't care about Lady Howe talking nonsense, because she is a *farceuse* and one can laugh in her face. But the other is a sincere and sober-minded dame.

The Faery has sent me the life of the Prince Consort,

which I think will interest, and also the wedding medal of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. It is very good; by a German artist of Darmstadt. I think I never saw a more striking likeness than that of the Grand Duchess, and yet beautiful as a work of art.

I am here quite alone, Monty having departed. I cannot say I am in particularly high spirits, seeing so little, as I do, of those I love.

I am ashamed of "Vivian Grey" and the "Young Duke," and wish I could have suppressed them. They are too puerile.

Your affectionate

D

In his irritable frame of mind he was easily upset. "Yesterday came twelve boxes and two from the Faery," he told Lady Bradford on December 12th; "one changing all the arrangements that had been made for the meeting of Parliament which had been fixed for the 9th. As the Council is to-day, I was kept in a tumult for hours—no less than seven telegrams to the Duke of Richmond and replies, and then letters by the post to explain telegrams. And I quite alone. Too terrible! It ought never to have happened." A thoughtful gift from Lady Chesterfield put him into a good humour once more:

Bournemouth,
December 14th, 1874

The waistcoat is a great success. It fits exactly. What is the material? Shetland? It came just in time, for we

have black frosts and north-east winds. Yesterday I thought we were going to have the snow, which has visited every other place; but to-day, though severe, it is bright.

Yesterday, I ventured to go to Church and your jacket was invaluable. I went to High Church, but which is quite moderate compared with the Ritualistic temple here which, they say, beats everything in Protestant Christendom. Monty went a week ago and saw most wonderful High Jinks!

Next Sunday I am going to Low Church with Isabella of Exeter whom, however, I have not yet seen.

Monty leaves me again to-day, and for some time.

I hope you are quite well and less anxious about Lady Carnarvon. My symptoms are floating gout and lingering bronchitis, but they are both greatly modified and I get stronger every day.

What a dull letter! But it really comes from a hermit.

Your affectionate

D

To Lady Bradford

Bournemouth,
December 18th 1874

Your gay letter from Ingestre received this afternoon gave a little fillip, which I often want here. It is a melancholy, rather than a dull life—this existence of mine here; but I begin to think, except I were with you, it is as good a one as I could lead. If I had the charm of composition, it would be more than bearable; but business does not absorb, it is despatched and then everything is flat. I have a good deal to do here for though I gave orders that nothing

was to be sent down express, unless there were private boxes from the Queen, the Faery has been so very active in affairs that, on an average, I have had a special messenger every day, bringing all the Foreign Office boxes; so, at any rate, there is no arrear. My London secretaries send their bag every morning.

Henry Lennox, who has been in rebellion with the Treasury ever since the formation almost of the Government, terribly distresses me—and I have had, this morning, to address to him a terrible Despatch which occasioned me great anxiety and trouble. I have also had some other special business of a trying nature, which might have been more conveniently arranged personally. It is in these sort of things I feel the want of an able secretary that I can entirely trust.

I wish you were here; I think you would help me very much. Difficulties often disappear when you express them to a sympathising and intelligent friend.

I summoned up my energies to call on Isabella of Exeter to-day; she has been very civil to me and is to take me to church next Sunday. I thought it would hardly do to make our first acquaintance, after ten years, in her pew. She was looking very well and was very kind, and then, by way of small talk, said that she remembered at Burghley that I was a reader of my bible, which was a great satisfaction to her. I replied, I hoped I had searched the scriptures. "But what have you found," she said, "have you found the truth?" "I have found many things," I replied; "but if I were to attempt now to detail them to you, you would lose your drive and I observed your carriage at the door," and so I escaped.

The Faery has telegraphed every other day. This has just come. I enclose it, because it may amuse you and show her tone.

The evenings are most trying, because one cannot be always reading, and indeed what is there worth reading? Very little in English, and the *Revue des Deux Mondes* is soon exhausted, though unquestionably the leading periodical of the day.

I find great interest in all the darling gifts you have made me. If you were ever absent from my thoughts, which I can truly say you are not, the setting of the aneroid, the constant use of the pencil and the almost perpetual use of my mitts would unceasingly recall you. I have not yet used my new pair. I keep them for a great occasion. I accept no invitations here; none of these insidious luncheons and all that. Dinners, of course, out of the question, though Isabella of E. has asked me to meet Lord Harrowby and Sandon. What a treat! and the Lord Chancellor to keep Christmas Day. A family party whom I don't know!

I hope I shall see you again in this world; if not, remember always

D

In a second letter to Lady Bradford on December 18th, Disraeli had some illuminating comments to make on some of the many persons who were interested in the state of his health:

Lady Howe told Monty yesterday that there is to be a great invasion from Crichel to-morrow—its Lord and

Gussie and Lady A. The Howes wanted me to lunch there, but I declined, having never yet even entered the town and disliking at all times to feed in public. I suspect, however, the invading host will mount the cliffs and assault the Bath Hotel. The Howes think that it is a visit of reconnaissance on the part of Lady A. as to the health of the Earl.[3] Between ourselves, I don't think he can be worse. I have met him once or twice on the cliff with a respirator. My own opinion is that Lady A. intended to do a double stroke of business and ascertain what the real state of the Primo was; but I don't think she will be able to tell much to Gladstone that will inspirit him on that head. I certainly have made a considerable advance these last few days.

And a remark by Lady Bradford, in a letter to him on the subject of books, evoked an interesting comment on Bulwer's recent volume:

There is a remarkable feature in the life of G. Bulwer. It is, in fact, the history of the three most memorable years in my life, and yet my name, and no allusion to my words or acts, ever appear in the whole narrative. This, I thought once, a great merit and it was grateful to my feelings at the time. But Van de Weyer, a good judge, thought it occasioned a deficiency of historical truth and caused the omission of some scenes which would have been striking. None of the philippics against Peel are noticed nor the extraordinary scenes which they usually occasioned.

[3] Lord Howe.

Nevertheless the book is written with as much impartiality as if I had been writing of the times of Pericles or Cæsar.

On December 21st he began a letter to Lady Bradford with the words: "It is not a slice of the moon I want; I want all." Lady Bradford made no reply, and for three days Disraeli himself remained silent. But on Christmas Eve he wrote to both sisters:

To Lady Bradford

Bournemouth,
Christmas Eve, 1874

Our correspondence seems to have closed! And yet I cannot resist sending you good wishes in this good season. I have been very much harassed and worried with many troublesome affairs, without a secretary who, however, returned last night and will not leave me, I hope, again.

Only think of the Irish Government announcing all the new legal arrangements without the pleasure of her Gracious Majesty having been taken upon them. The Queen was justly indignant; but the wires of Osborne, Bournemouth and Dublin and many other places, have been vibrating ever since. I am the only person who came out of the business pretty well and received a gracious missive in the Royal manual. "The Queen asks Mr. D. not to be worried about the business." . . .

The Henry Lennox business is not settled. He is an eel, but I do not think he will escape my grasp, which can be firm.

There are other things which I could tell you, that try, or should try a man; but that is not the reason I have not written. What has really depressed me, and for a moment utterly disheartened me, is the gradual return of my bronchial affection—I suppose the consequences of the severe weather—but this relapse unmans me when great exertions are necessary and at hand—and when I am reading every day leading articles congratulating the country on my return to health, &c.

Sometimes I hardly know what will, or can, happen, and this made me not write, because I found it impossible to write to you and conceal the state of affairs—but I shall and do, *strictly* to all others; as a renewal of the old reports would be most inconvenient at this moment. There is also the chance of the change of weather effecting some improvement: and of course, as to remedies, I am omitting none. I am writing now, with mustard on my throat. I should do no good by calling in Doctors here, because I am resolved to leave this place and there would be no time to make their experiments, all of which have been tried. When I go to London I shall see Dr. Kidd, who cured the Lord Chancellor and who is half a homeopathist. But I must see you before I go to London, or all the Physicians in the world will do me no good.

Therefore I am resolved to reach Crichel on the 4th; if affairs are very bad I shall only stay there a day or two and go to town; if they mend, as perhaps they may, I shall stay till the end of the week. The Cabinet is called together for Tuesday the 12th; the idea was that, after two or three meetings, we should then take another week in the country and then finally resume. If this comes round and

I am pretty right, I shall ask Bradford to receive me for that week. These may be dreams; but they are visions that keep me alive.

It is more than three months since I have seen you. I wish you had written and not been silent because I was. This must sometimes happen, and you should remember I am ill, sad, terribly weighted, and quite alone. However, I am always grateful to you for all you have done for me and never think of you but with the utmost affection.

D

P.S.—Lord Exeter is delighted with being made the Custos of the Soke of Peterborough.

"This is Christmas Eve and I must send you good wishes in this good time," he wrote to Lady Chesterfield. " . . . The severe weather has been very trying to me; but I hope it has not materially thrown me back and now the frost has vanished." The year was not to close, however, without further anxiety on the score of the Prime Minister's health. "Monty sent for Leggatt," he informed Lady Bradford on December 28th, "as he got nervous about me. But I hope it is only a temporary check and all will go right." And he ended his letter with an expression of the hope which he was cherishing above all other hopes—"All my thoughts now are concentrated on the hope of seeing you at Crichel." Yet while he was giving expression to this aspiration, Lady Bradford was engaged in shattering it:

LADY CHESTERFIELD AND HER DAUGHTER

Bournemouth,
December 29th, 1874

I did not like the expression in your letter of the 28th about Crichel and darkly feared that the harassing fate that seems to attend every effort and opportunity of our meeting was again about to exercise its fell influence; and to-day that fear is confirmed with horrible certainty. I can't dwell on the matter, but apprehend the worst. As for Bruton Street, I am astonished at such expressions, some of which have reached me. It is going on for four months since I have seen you, and if Crichel fails, another four months of equal desolation may occur. If so, our relations could only rank with those which we may maintain with the departed whose loss we deplore—we may cherish their memory.

The snow which came from the south of France, commenced yesterday and has never ceased night or day. It is a white world and deeply crusted.

I think the verses must have been in that MS. book which the Fascinator told me was full of your original poems—and which was so unkindly taken by you, from its usual dwelling-place, before I could examine it.

To-morrow, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Smith Secretary of ye Treasury, come down here for business—two days. The Chancellor is the guest of the Lord Chancellor. Mr. Smith will be at the Hotel.

As I cannot venture out, the Congress, as it was originally arranged, cannot take place at Lord Cairns' where we were to have dined. And I shall have to entertain them here, a party of five.

How fortunate that Monty is here. He must be the *arbiter elegantiarum.*

Ever yours,

D

His last letter of the year was to Lady Chesterfield:

Bournemouth,
December 31st, 1874

Dearest, Dearest Lady Ches.,

Although I should like Carnarvon to have two strings to his bow, still, particularly after the great anxiety occasioned by the railway catastrophe, it is an immense relief that all has gone well, and I hope to receive continued good accounts. I wonder if your new granddaughter will sing anything as funny as the "Ten little Nigger boys all in a row?"

But what I want particularly to know is how you are yourself? Because your last account is not very satisfactory. As for myself, in that respect, I have recovered my little relapse; but it has only been by keeping in the house. This is a most savage climate and savage scene. Everything is white, the crust on the earth thick and hard and an Easterly wind always.

I have got three Cabinet Ministers and the Secretary of the Treasury dining with me to-day. I don't think dining together a very good way of transacting business—*Mais il faut commencer.* Our banquet will be splendid through you. To-morrow they are all to dine with the Lord Chancellor, except myself. I will not budge.

The Faery sent her congratulations this morning by

telegraph: but, for my part, I am not fond of observing, or celebrating, anniversaries.

A telegram has just come that the Spaniards have at last found a King: the army have declared in favor of Prince Alfonso, aged 17. I envy him his years more than his crown.

I hope the New Year will bring you nothing but happiness, and that I may repeat this wish *in Sæcula Sæculorum!*

Yours ever,

D

CHAPTER XI

January–February 1875

THE OPENING OF THE SESSION

With the new year came a change in the weather, and with milder weather Disraeli's health improved:

Bournemouth,
January 3rd, 1875

Dearest Lady Ches.,

The thaw has quite revived me and removed all my *malaise*. I hope it has equally benefited you.

The Faery writes to me continually and is every day, I think, more gracious. It will interest you some day to read her letters.

I expect to be in London about the 9th; only a few days now. To-morrow, I shall leave this place and go to Crichel. I think the change, especially in this weather, will be beneficial and preparatory to a greater change in the shape of Downing Street.

The Bournemouth telegraph is working all day with the Spanish news. I was going out to take a walk an hour ago when I was stopped with a telegram five sheets long, and in cypher! Serrano is apparently trying to escape into France. The young king has left Paris and

will at once make his triumphant entrance into Madrid.[1]

Your affectionate

D

Before leaving for Crichel he had a communication to make to Lady Bradford—"The Duke of Montrose has left me a Lord Lieutenancy and a Thistle. You disposed of the last; what will you do with this?" And from Crichel he wrote to the Master of the Horse:

Crichel,
January 7th, 1875

My dear Bradford,

The Lord Lieutenancy of Shropshire being now vacant, I propose, if agreeable to yourself, to submit your name to the Queen to fill that important office. In so doing, I shall have the double satisfaction of recommending one who will represent Her Majesty with ability and dignity, but one, also, whom I have the happiness of counting among my most valued friends.

Yours most sincerely,

Disraeli

From Crichel Disraeli proceeded to London, and was quickly immersed in business preparatory to the approaching Session:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
January 13th, 1875

The Cabinet has been so long and business here is so pressing that I have been unable to reach you to-day, which

[1] Marshal Serrano had, in fact, withdrawn to France; and during the opening days of January, Alfonso XII, who had received the support of the army, was recognised throughout Spain. He entered Madrid on January 14th.

I much regret; for I wanted to thank you for your charming present, which recalls my youth when I used to see you in your Opera Box and when we met at Wycombe Abbey.

The picture is a very clever painting and it is difficult for me to express to you how much I value it. When I saw it for the first time, it was only the portrait of a beautiful woman; but now I have the happiness of feeling it is that of a friend whose kindness makes my life delightful, and to whom I bear the utmost affection.

D

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
January 13th, 1875, 7 o'clock

A hurried line to hope that your voyage(!) has been well and that you found your daughter better.

Lord Salisbury called on me this morning at 12, and we had an interesting hour over our Central Asia and all its mysterious fortunes and perils. It is impossible for any one to be more cordial!

Then a Cabinet at three which lasted till nearly six, then I had to write to the Queen anent: and now to somebody else who must not be angry if these hasty lines are dull and meagre. Mr. Hardy will attend the Cabinet to-morrow. This makes it almost certain that I shall be able to reach Weston on Monday. Now I must smoke a harmless segar.

Yours ever,

D

The Queen has given £50 per annum to the widow of Giovanni Battista Falcierci, Lord Byron's faithful servant and once mine.

10 Downing Street,
January 15th, 1875

We have concluded our labors with the fourth Cabinet this morning, and adjourned unto the 26th, or 28th, of the month. Therefore, I shall have the pleasure, God willing, of seeing you next Monday. I am told I ought to leave town a little after 12 and should then be landed at Shifnal about 5.20. Only this depends on the Lord Lieutenant giving orders that the train should stop there. I am not very sure about these details but Monty will look after them.

Yesterday, or rather the day before, I received an invitation from Lady Charlotte Sturt to dine with her and meet Lady Howe! Lord George Paget!! the wife of "His Excellency" the "false Selina!" and Monty!!! I did not go; but Monty, who did, says it was good fun.

I have sent Bradford a cygnet. I doubt not your *chef* knows how to dress him; but in case he has not as yet encountered such a strange bird, I would say he should be roasted with a pound of beefsteak in him and served with currant sauce. Very delicate food, like leveret. I had a whole roebuck sent me yesterday—but I think you don't like venison, even in that dainty shape, and I know your park is crowded with antlered tenants, so I thought it would rather bore B.

Instead of dining yesterday with the gay revellers above mentioned, I partook of a Bretby turkey in Bruton Street —rather a melancholy repast, for Lady Carnarvon had a relapse in the morning and Lord C. was very nervous and depressed. Gull came in the evening and was not dis-

couraging, and C. told me at the Cabinet to-day that her pulse had again subsided.

Yours,

D

Whitehall,
January 17th, 1875

The thought that I shall, in all probability, see you before this reaches Weston, or almost as soon, is full of delight.

I have no news; Monty has departed and I fear will not reach Weston; so if any cyphered Despatches arrive, I shall insist upon your working at them. I have no doubt you would accomplish the task much quicker and more adroitly than your correspondent.

I dined on Thursday, almost *tête-à-tête,* with the Lord Lieutenant's aunt and on Friday, in a circle almost as limited, with Lionel Rothschild. I found the great Baron much broken and greatly complaining, and I think his family are very anxious about him. This would be a great death, for his brains are as large as his fortune and he does everything.

The Russian Ambassador has asked me to a banquet which I have declined—and the Lord President of the Council, obliged to give an official dinner for the pricking of the Sheriffs. This, also, I shall avoid.

I hope to find your cold cured when I arrive and all well and prospering under your roof.

Yours ever,

D

The visit to Weston passed all too quickly, and when Disraeli writes again, he is back in London and absorbed once more in work:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Tuesday, January 26th, 1875

I had written her a line when I rose this morning. It was intentionally brief. I have also written to Carnarvon, lest he should make any rash resolves, and letting him know that he might command retirement, even for months, and that I and his colleagues would work his office for him—not so well as he could but with our best efforts.[2]

The Queen writes this morning that she must give up opening Parliament. Affairs there continue critical.

And now for what is dearer to me than life—yourself, though you never believe it. I count upon your letting me know when I can see you. Generally speaking, I shall always be at home, or at least never absent for more than an hour.

D

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 28th, 1875

Dearest of dear friends,

Selina tells me it would not be disagreeable to you to have a line from one who is always thinking of you with tenderness.

In less than an hour I go to the Cabinet, which meets to-day at 12 o'clock: and there will be another to-morrow

[2] Lady Carnarvon had died on January 25th.

though not, probably, at so early an hour. Everything flourishes. And the Liberal decomposition begins to become ludicrous.

The Faery writes to me every day and telegraphs to me in the interval. I have heard twice from Osborne this morning. Ariel herself could not be swifter; in short magic, if it could be exercised, would be too tame for modern life. The Faery often mentions you.

Henry Lennox, they say, has a lucid interval and there is a prospect of our extricating him out of his scrape. His various accounts of his troubles and their causes equal, in number and invention, the Arabian nights. I have still a regard for him, although he worries and mortifies me.

Your affectionate

D

2 Whitehall Gardens
January 29th, 1875

Dearest Lady Chesterfield,

I had an early Cabinet to-day and a long one. It was to settle the Queen's Speech, which I have just sent off to Her Majesty for Her consideration and approval.

I called on Lady Derby this afternoon. She was full of my adventures at Bournemouth, and Lady Howe!

I am going to dine to-day almost *tête-à-tête* with Lionel Rothschild. I cannot endure my solitary dinners and evenings, and Monty has so many friends that I cannot count much on his presence.

To-morrow, I go to Hughenden for a day or two, where affairs require attention. I have not been there for four months. I suppose Lady Bradford is at Weston. I have

never received a single line from her. All things change. Not my feelings to you, for they are full of affection.

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
January 30th, 1875

I was glad to see your handwriting which had become somewhat strange.

I am going to Hughenden to-day with Monty—and on Tuesday, I am going to Osborne and to stay there till the Council is held on the 4th. The *Alberta* is to be placed at my disposal, which can go alongside the pier, so I am not to get into an open boat, and there is a cabin closed in on the deck, where I am to sit during the passage. Mr. Corry is to accompany me and I am forbidden to make any change in my usual evening costume, as it might give me cold. Everything is to be made comfortable for me and it is hoped I may stay for two days in order that I may rest, and having the *Alberta,* I may choose my own time. What do you think of this? And when will you be so kind to me? Fancy Monty a recognised courtier! The first Private Secretary whose existence has been acknowledged by royal lips.

I have just had a heart-rending appeal from the little Duchess, who is going to Italy the end of next week and wishes to see me before her departure. I am really sorry, for it is impossible for me to see her and she never will believe it. Hughenden and Osborne will occupy me all the week till Friday, and then Parliament opens. She subscribes

herself "Yours affectionately." Are you a little jeal? I fear not. She mourns over the fruitless visit to Weston, but was consoled for not seeing me by the conviction that I was much better being out of doors.

To-day I have had the Mover and Seconder of the Address to coach for their impending achievements. There was a great contrast between the patrician Stanhope, little alike in mind and body and full of bright intelligence—and the Glasgow successor of Baillie Nicol Jarvie, without his manner and with all his brogue.[3]

Adieu!

D

Disraeli spent two days at Hughenden and returned to London on February 1st, being due to visit the Queen at Osborne on the 2nd, prior to the opening of Parliament on the 5th.

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 2nd, 1875

. . . I returned from Hughenden yesterday. I had not been there for four months and went down to escape from the dreary loneliness of my life, which becomes every day more insupportable. However, though my visit was short, I did some business. I let a farm, and broke to my architect that his genius was not to be exercised in my favor. He would have made me, he tells me, the best

[3] The Mover and Seconder were the Hon. E. Stanhope, Lincolnshire, and Mr. A. Whitelaw, Glasgow.

house in the County instead of, as he insinuated, having the worst; but I was relentless. The truth is, my project of building entirely originated in wishing to raise a morning room looking to the south for you; but I now know your family too well to believe that you will ever see Hughenden again. I was rather green in that respect last Whitsun . . .

The political world was never more amusing. I am glad that Harty-Tarty [4] has won the day. Never was a party in such a position and though I never would confess it to anybody but yourself, never was a man in a prouder position than myself. It never happened before and is not likely to happen again. Only those who are acquainted with the malignity of Gladstone through a rivalship of five and twenty years, can understand this . . .

There was no harm that the news about Carlyle and Tennyson got about. It was done purposely by Lady Derby. The suggestion has made the Government very popular with all the professors of *belles-lettres*.

A letter from Lady Bradford addressed to Disraeli at Hughenden had missed him there, and only reached him at Osborne. He hastened to explain his omission to reply to it:

Osborne,
Wednesday, February 3rd, 1875

I have only just this moment, by the Queen's messenger, 5 o'clock, got your letter of the 31st addressed to Hughenden.

[4] A reference to the election of Lord Hartington as leader of the Liberal party in place of Mr. Gladstone.

It is a dear letter, and I would not, for many worlds, have you think that I was ungrateful for it. Yet you must have thought me so. We could only stay at Hughenden for the Sunday. I thought of you there very much; but not with happiness, for, as far as you were concerned, it seemed to me a chapter closed in my life.

I wrote to you on Tuesday—with the hope it might reach you at Weston before your departure. Perhaps it did not, for confusion and blunders are seldom single. It was a wretched letter, for I was wretched.

I can only seize this instant to write to you now; for in less than ten minutes I am to have my great audience.

I dined with H.M. yesterday and shall to-day. The Queen was in good humor and gay. The Princess Louise is here. I sate next to her. There were 8.

Yours,

D

The Session opened well, as Disraeli hastened to inform Lady Chesterfield:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 5th, 1875

Dearest, dearest Lady C.,

It is hardly 8 o'clock and the debate is over. Edward Stanhope moved the Address in an admirable speech; his vindication of our Colonial Empire was really eloquent, and he brought all his official experience, as a Sanitary Inspector, to bear upon our legislation for the Public Health with great effect. Harty-Tarty did very well; exactly as

I expected he would; sensible, dullish, and gentlemanlike. Lowe said, "At last, I have heard a proper Leader's speech; all good sense and no earnest nonsense."

I waited a moment to let some one rise, but no one would, and then got up. I pleased my friends and the House; and all said I was in my "old form."

Tell the dear being who I hope is dining with you, that my voice never was better—not the slightest huskiness.

Monty is going to dine with me.

The grapes were delicious this morning. I attribute my good voice to them. I hope, now, that you will be able soon to let me come and see you.

Give 1000 loves from me to Selina, and, as Schoolboys say, accept the same.

D

There was, however, one cause for anxiety; Monty Corry was taken ill, Disraeli wrote distractedly to Lady Bradford:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 9th, 1875

I could not get to Hill Street yesterday, the pressure of business is so great and no Monty. I am sure his work is over. This is really a great catastrophe. How unsuspected are the greatest sorrows! He came up as I expected from Hinchingbrooke; complained of having had a bad night, very excited, lunched, then began to write letters, then found he could not work, except at the office, went to the office and did not work; came to the House of Commons, found his head bad and then went away.

I have never mentioned this before, or scarcely, as, having

months before him, I had counted on his getting well by campaign time, as I have done. But alas!

I hope to get for a moment to Hill Street to-day; about three. How are you?

Yours,

D

This untoward happening came at a time of great pressure: "I have a Cabinet to-day," he told Lady Bradford on February 10th, "and I think a long one. How I am to fulfil my social duties as well, seems difficult." And five days later he wrote—"I called and you had only left your home by five minutes. It was unfortunate as I wished much to speak to you; and to-morrow morning I fear it is impossible, for the times, though not perilous, are rather stormy, and I may have to summon the Cabinet early." Later the same day he wrote again—"I forgot, in the hurry of affairs, to answer your kind enquiries about dining with you on Saturday, which I will do with pleasure . . . Alas! that I should not have seen you to-day." He had much the same story to tell Lady Chesterfield on February 16th—"I was grieved not to have written to you yesterday as I had proposed; but a long Irish squabble occurred before dinner and I was obliged to keep at my post to control the unruly elements." To this letter he added a postscript of a more personal kind: "Things don't go well with Selina. There really was not the slightest valid reason why you should not have given me a picture which belonged to yourself." And something of his irritation crept into a

letter to Lady Bradford written the same day—"I hope the country will restore you to all your health. If you can find time to write to me I shall be grateful. Gratitude is not a very rich offering, but it is as much, I suspect, as you care ever to receive from me."

During the next day or two there were exciting doings in the House of Commons to write about. "The election of Mitchell for Tipperary," he told Lady Chesterfield, "will lead to some violent scenes, as I am resolved that a rebel shall not take his seat in the House of Commons. I believe he will be elected to-day." This expectation was fulfilled—"I must give you a hurried note when I can snatch a second to write, for I have a good deal on my shoulders at this moment. . . . Public affairs are getting rather hot, what with Fenian and Tichborne members of Parliament. However, I am very well, thank God, and it is not these sorts of troubles that shake my nerves." [5] In the end Disraëli's judgment of the situation was triumphantly vindicated:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 19th, 1875

Dear Darling,

I received your welcome letter this morning. If my affection could in the slightest degree mitigate your sorrows, I should feel a certain degree of happiness.

[5] Letter to Lady Chesterfield, dated February 17th. The words "Tichborne member of Parliament" referred to Kenealy, the counsel who had been ejected from the profession for his methods in conducting the defence of the Tichborne claimant; but who, being unconvicted and having been duly elected, was held by Disraeli to be entitled to advance to the table of the House and take the oath.

I could not write yesterday, for it was a day of great trouble and anxiety. The Opposition Chiefs had signified their intention to support my resolution against the rebel, Mitchell; but only just before the meeting of the House, I heard that Harcourt and Lowe had got round Lord Hartington and persuaded him to support, as an amendment, a Committee to enquire. This, if carried, would have been a great blow and it was supposed that there was a chance, and not a bad one, of its being carried. If I had accepted the amendment, in lieu of my own uncompromising resolutions, the humiliation of the Government would have been very great.

The result showed that I had not miscalculated the spirit of the House of Commons, and the Opposition Chiefs, while taking an unpatriotic course to please the Irish rebels sustained an ignominious overthrow. There has seldom been a greater triumph for a Minister than yesterday. After dividing on the pretence of adjourning the Debate and getting beaten by a majority of more than 160, they allowed my resolutions to pass *nemine contradicente.*

And while passions were being stirred in the House by these events, Disraeli found himself embarrassed by what he not inaptly described as "a struggle between Parliamentary Privilege and semi-royal Prerogative":

I was engaged to dine with the Speaker whom I "threw over," as the phrase is, for the Prince of Wales' alleging *commands.*

The Speaker would not take my excuse, alleging that there was no "command" except from the Sovereign; that a

dinner to the Ministry without the Prime Minister was a mockery; and that he must vindicate the authority of the Chair.

The Prince behaved very well. I was rather afraid and prepared he would be annoyed. Monty, who was pretty well, was of great use to me. He saw Knollys and explained the painful situation and afterwards saw the Prince, who had been hunting. The Prince said it was a grand party, all the Ambassadors and the Derbys, &c., and that he wanted the Prime Minister; that he thought the Speaker always dined on Saturday (in which he was right; this is an innovation); but he felt the importance of the situation and so released me. Monty was with him twenty minutes or so, and he was amiable and agreeable. In the evening came a large card and a note from Knollys, saying the Prince thought I could be represented at the dinner by no one better than by my faithful secretary. Monty is quite in his stirrups and has no doubt that all the Prince's banditti at the Marlboro' Club will be very jealous.

I trust your cold is cured. Change of air is good for that, if nothing else.

D

From a letter written to Lady Bradford on the 18th, it would seem that Disraeli would have been better pleased if semi-royal Prerogative had won the day:

I have not seen Monty, so I know nothing of his gay doings. The frigid Festival of Routine at which I had to assist, had its usual elements of boredom aggravated. The poor Speaker was obliged to talk incessantly to me to make up

for tearing me from Marlborough House; and as I scarcely eat dinner (and his was most elaborate) the effort on his part was great and painfully self-sacrificing. After dinner (quite unusual till this dynasty) Mrs. Brand had a reception. I never saw her before and I never wish to see her again. I escaped immediately, and yet encountered crowds of people who deserved to be painted by Teniers.

Now and then his letters conveyed items of news which showed that beneath the comparatively unruffled surface of Continental life, explosive passions rumbled ominously:

To Lady Chesterfield

10 Downing Street,
February 21st, 1875

Dearest Friend,

Little to tell you; but I did not like Monday morning at Bretby to be a blank.

A telegram, this instant arrived from Mr. Layard at Madrid, gives rather a gloomy account of the state of affairs. Moriones, the only capable soldier they had, has resigned his command, because they have placed over him, as Commander-in-Chief, an almost unknown, and considered incapable, man; and Bilbao is again in danger.

Selina arrived yesterday and I called upon her in the morning and I dined there afterwards, as you know. I believe I am to meet her at dinner to-day. But I have nothing significant to communicate.

I was at Chapel Royal (Whitehall) to-day, to hear one of

my new Deans preach: him of Worcester.[6] I was not proud of my appointment. He is, however, a very good-looking man, but almost ludicrously like his brother the late Lord H.

Your affectionate

D

More often—in the case of Lady Bradford—his letters showed by their tone that beneath his own sphinx-like exterior, emotion seethed and bubbled:

February 22nd, 1875

I should like to have seen you before your departure, though it is probably very weak my saying so; but to-day it is impossible and, I think, to-morrow looks a trying day for me. I am aware you dislike my calling on you without giving you notice; and I could wish always to do so as I know you have many claims on your time and feelings with which I cannot pretend to compete, and which my inconvenient presence may disturb. But it is difficult on many days to do anything but take my chance—the resource of the forlorn.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 23rd, 1875

Your letter reached me yesterday evening at the House of Commons by eight o'clock. I remember the time when such words of sympathy would have sustained me in the fiercest and most perilous struggle—but, as it is, I am grateful for words of kindness, though my note did not contemplate and did not deserve them.

[6] Dean Grantham Yorke, brother of the 4th Earl of Hardwicke.

I shall take my chance to-day, of finding you at home for a moment at half-past 2 o'clock; but I make this suggestion in the full confidence that you will not derange your plans for me. . . .

I shall not come to-day in my brougham, so that source of annoyance will cease to exist, and you may be quite sure I shall not scold.

D

His letters to Lady Chesterfield, on the other hand, reflected the smooth and pleasant nature of his relations with her, and were often, for this very reason, the more informing:

10 Downing Street,
February 23rd, 1875

Dearest Lady C.,

Last night was good: the first party fight of the Session; the Opposition selected the occasion; they had a plausible case and some very good speaking from Lowe and Trevelyan —and they were beaten by nearly 100 majority!

Gladstone was on the front bench and I thought once was about to rise. I reserved myself for him.

The committee of Secretaries of State to whom, at the suggestion of the Lord Chancellor, the case of Henry Lennox was referred, has decided against him and asserted the supremacy of the Treasury which he defied. Mr. Secretary Hardy is drawing up the Report, and he will let down our friend Henry as much as he can. What it is to be an agreeable fellow and to have friends.

The Queen has sent me some verses by the Dean of Westminster on the recovery of Prince Leopold.

Your affectionate

D

Whitehall Gardens,
February 24th, 1875

My dearest Lady C.,

I was very glad indeed to have your letter this morning. If you have not forwarded the newspaper, pray keep it if it interests you. I should think it difficult, not to say impossible, to obtain another copy. How came it to you? From Selina? Monty sent it to her, not I.

I assure you, I do not make mountains of molehills. Mine are real mountains. But even mountains may be moved—by Faith. I begin to think mine will.

Monty has just come in and told me that he had had a letter from "dear Lady Ches." That lady is very dear indeed to Monty's master. He thinks of her ever, and always with love. Monty will send you the paper back.

I have a Cabinet at three o'clock, and a meeting with the Lord Chancellor and Duke of Richmond at half past 2. Therefore you must pardon this barren letter.

My first dinner is also to-day. The German Ambassador dines with me. I have asked an Ambassador to each of my dinners, a new feature. The Russian on the 6th March. Count Schouvaloff is a most agreeable man and very good looking and very clever.

When he had his first audience of me in the Spring on his arrival, he could not speak or comprehend a word of English. Yesterday at the Levee he said to me, "I want

to have the honor of another interview some day, but here I will not talk shop." And so I found that he not only speaks English, but English slang; quite idiomatic.

Give my kindest regards to Lady A., who, I am delighted to hear, is with you and believe me ever, dear darling Lady C.,

Your very affectionate

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 25th, 1875

My dearest, dearest Lady C.,

I was happy to hear from you this morning. I must write to you when I can snatch a moment and generally, as now, in the morning; so my news, if I had any, must not be the latest.

Yesterday evening about seven o'clock arrived here a little deal case from the Faery enclosing three very small bouquets; two of snowdrops and the other of primroses. I wore the snowdrops on my heart at my banquet where there were many stars and ribbons. I had none, but still, I was decorated by my Sovereign. My banquet was very successful. It was gay and brilliant; and the dinner very high class for that sort of thing. A well-dressed, and hot dinner—which it was—is rare for a party of more than forty.

I sate between the German Ambassador and Duke of Manchester. The German is a very clever man; up to everything in England and with much conversational power. Next to Duke of Manchester was Lothair,[7] who had come

[7] The Marquess of Bute.

from the wilds of Scotland to dine with me, and show his gratitude for his Thistle. But that was not his only hardship. For it is Lent and he might eat no meat. So he ordered the servant behind him to appropriate a huge dish of salmon well-sauced, and he was helped repeatedly during the whole repast.

I always forget to tell you the new joke about the Whigs, which has now become a very old one and, I dare say, has reached even Bretby. You know Lord Derby, *père,* said the Whigs were *dished:* they say now they are Caven*dished.*

Lord Charles resigned because he is very infirm and is entitled to his full pension. The place is in the gift of the Lord Chamberlain who wants to prefer one of his sons-in-law. The House of Commons is very indignant and wants the Deputy-Speaker, Gossett, a great favourite with all parties, and who has served for five and thirty years, to be promoted. The House is so excited that I think you will hear something of this.

We have been all snow and I thought your Turkey was really a Xmas gift: but to-day it is bland. Let me thank you for that Turkey and many other things.

I can't make out what you say about Lady A. When I wrote "Tancred," I could not have known her. It is nearly thirty years ago. And, certainly, when you read it last year, you recognised no resemblance to her in any of the characters. The truth is, when I write, I never introduce photographs of any living character, though it is impossible, when dealing with human nature, not to appropriate some human traits. I am glad, and more than glad, that she is with you. Give her my kind regards.

Tell me about your health. To-day we might have driven together in Italy.

Adieu! my dearest friend,

D

As compared with the smooth tenor of his correspondence with Lady Chesterfield, Disraeli's intercourse with Lady Bradford was marked by violent and incalculable variations. Days of tumultuous feeling would be succeeded by periods of comparative calm; and at such times he delighted in giving her elaborately drawn descriptions of his experiences. The broad difference between his feelings for the two sisters is well illustrated by a comparison of the accounts which he gave them of the gift of flowers from the Queen referred to in his letter to Lady Chesterfield of February 25th, and of his official dinner party which took place on the day on which he received this mark of royal favour:

To Lady Bradford

House of Commons,
February 25th, 1875

I received your letter by post. When I returned yesterday evening from Belgrave Square, I found on my table amid a crowd of letters and packets, a small and delicate-looking wooden case with the Queen's name on it; and when it was opened, there appeared three miniature bouquets—two of primroses and one of snowdrops.

I wrote to the Faery to thank her this morning and wish I had a copy of my letter to send you, for it might have

amused you—but, as you know, I never keep copies. One of the points was that I had a banquet that evening and that, amid my stars and ribbons, some snowdrops on my heart proved that I was also decorated by a gracious Sovereign. Then, I said, that I had awakened in the night and fancied it was all a dream, or that they were magical flowers sent me, perhaps, by another Sovereign—Queen Titania, who had been gathering flowers with her Court in a soft and sea-girt isle, and had sent me some blossoms which, according to the legend, deprived the recipient of his senses. I said I certainly should lose my head were not my sense of duty to my Sovereign stronger, I really believed, than my conceit. Something like this, only a little more polished.

The dinner, which I expected to be a failure, turned out to be a great success. The physical part was good. It was really a dinner of high calibre and quite hot, which is wonderful when you have to feed forty. I sate between the German Ambassador and Duke of Manchester, who is silly but not dull. Next to him was Lothair, who had travelled up from the wilds of Scotland to show his gratitude for his Thistle. He had other hardships to endure, for it is Lent! and of course he could eat nothing but fish. He managed pretty well, for he instructed his attendant to secure for him a large dish of well-sauced salmon and that sustained him during all the courses. Claud Hamilton sate next to Lothair and talked well, and made him talk. But everybody talked. I think it was the most noisy party, without being boisterous, I well recollect. These affairs generally are solemn, not to say dull. To make up for the lack of brilliant furniture, I gave them carte-blanche for plants and flowers; and they certainly effected marvels. I had a bou-

quet before me, which I would have given anything to have sent you—but I knew you were on the wing. I found Münster a very capable man; with great conversational powers. The cold, proud Duke of Northumberland sate next to him, but was grim and acid.

I hope you will make this out; I have been writing all day and the muscles of my hand desert me. And now I must try and write a line to Bretby, from whom I heard this morning. I have the greatest affection for your sister and wish to do everything at this moment to sustain her—but the tax of writing to her, and so often, is almost too much. But I do, and will do it because I know it pleases you.

Ever,

D

CHAPTER XII

February–March 1875

AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME

By the end of February Disraeli's great programme of social reform was well launched. Yet the smooth progress of his political programme seemed always to be being impeded by adventitious episodes, all more or less embarrassing to him in his position of Prime Minister and Leader of the House of Commons:

To Lady Bradford

Whitehall Gardens,
February 26th, 1875

No letter to-day! But it was impossible I could have had one. True, but the blank is the same. And to-morrow will one come? That is possible—but will it appear?

We did well in the House last night and carried the second reading of our Friendly Societies Bill. That, with the Artisans' Dwelling Bill, is the second measure of social improvement that, I think, we shall now certainly pass. It is important, because they indicate a policy round which the country can rally.

The question who shall be Sergeant at Arms in the House of Commons is agitating political society and is in a

strange quandary. I don't know whether I told you what had occurred before you departed.

In brief, Lord Hertford nominated his son-in-law (Erskine, I think) and sent in his name to the Queen. The House of Commons signed a Memorial to Her Majesty, praying the Queen to bestow the office on Gossett, which they intended the Speaker to present. He disapproved the Memorial as an interference with the Prerogative, but said he would represent the unanimous feeling of the House to the Primo &c. &c. So I wrote to the Queen and put the matter before her, never anticipating what would happen. Last night I received her reply.

She has thrown over Lord Hertford and leaves me to communicate her gracious favor to the Commons; the son-in-law of Lord Hertford to have the deputy place. I have not told a human being except you as I wish, if possible, to spare Lord H. and give him a golden occasion to be gracious.

The Faery comes up to-day and telegraphed yesterday to ask me to come to Windsor if possible on Saturday and stay, if I could, to Monday. I shall go to-morrow, but return on Sunday if I can, as the business of the House of Lords becomes more critical every hour. I am very well, I think stronger than I have been for years. I never, in the whole course of my life which, as Louis Philippe once said to me, speaking of his own, "has been a life of great vicissitudes," was ever more entirely free from private anxieties. I have the Court with me and the Parliament and, I really think, the country, and yet, I will not say I am wretched or miserable, for you will only treat such words as the exaggerated expression of fantastic sentiment—though you may some day understand them—but I am so low-

spirited that I cannot really. "Something too much of this." Let me hope that you are well and happy. Remember me kindly to Wilton who was my friend when few were.

D

He reflected further on the cause of his *malaise* in a letter written the same day to Lady Chesterfield:

What makes me low spirited? I think it is because neither you nor somebody else is in town. And if she were I am not sure that somebody else would care to see me. What a strange thing is Life! And what a stranger thing the human heart! I can decypher neither, though in my time I was once thought a judge of that sort of thing. . . . What a stupid scrawl is this to send you, dear darling! You deserve something better. Alas! I have nothing to send you but love.

Disraeli's path was not always a smooth one, and if, in moments of elation, he wrote as if he was carrying everything before him, he was equally dramatic when referring to the difficulties which came his way:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
February 27th, 1875

I had to call a Cabinet for this morning at 12 o'clock on unexpected and weighty affairs, and at 5 o'clock I go down to Windsor, and the interval will be full of business—and very hard business. Nothing can look worse than the great

matter, and I must prepare the Queen for not accepting resignations unless I can direct the storm—which I doubt.

His reception by the Queen was flattering, and before retiring for the night he found time to give Lady Bradford a description of it:

Windsor Castle,
Saturday Night, February 27th, 1875

I have escaped from the courtiers to my own rooms and I will write you a line. I have written to you every day since we parted—I fear not agreeable letters, but at any rate they show you were not forgotten.

I had a telegram in the morning suggesting that as I could not stay over Sunday, I should come tolerably early to-day: 5 o'clock train. Therefore I was not surprised that at 6 o'clock I was summoned to the Royal closet—that is now the former private room of the Prince Consort; a very small chamber, the walls covered with choice works of art by Meissonnier and that class, and many souvenirs. I have often been received there and its chief peculiarity is that it contains only *one* chair. When I was ushered in to-day I observed *two*. I was discreet enough not to conjecture for whom the second was intended and remained standing some minutes before the Queen entered from an opposite door, and then she begged me to be seated—as she did at Osborne—a thing quite unprecedented. Then occurred a conversation of the highest interest on all subjects public and private, and conducted as naturally as if you and I were talking together. Such things are not to be written, and to be told only to you. She dismissed me by saying, "we shall

meet at dinner." At dinner I sate next to Princess Beatrice whom I made talk. She is developing into another Princess Louise whom she resembles.

I shall go up to town to-morrow as early as I can—to see Lord Cairns. The weather distresses me—but I can't afford to be ill. See what I have got to do. To-morrow, the Levee and a great debate in the Commons; our Irish Policy; Sir M. Beach will introduce it. On Tuesday Mr. Fawcett makes his Education attack; a very ticklish question. I have proposed to Edward Stanhope to follow him. On Wednesday, the meeting of the Peers; at present all chaos. On Thursday, the battle of Armageddon when the Opposition are to make a renewed attack on our Army Exchanges Bill.

What prospect is there or my seeing you! This may be a slight affair to you, to me it still is everything. That you should be days in town after this absence and I not see you, is terrible; and all that time, too, in a choice part with those who will be so glad that I can't come. I shall take this up to town with me and post it at the office.

Whether it be the climate, or something else, or both, I feel quite done up at a moment which requires all my energies. And yet I write to you! Once my delight; now, not devoid of pain, but inevitable.

I hope that Melton has quite cured you and that you are happier than

Yours,

D

Apart from the problems, large and small, which were perpetually cropping up in the House of Commons to tax

the energies and the ingenuity of the Prime Minister, Disraeli was at the moment preoccupied with a difficulty of some magnitude in connection with the functions of the House of Lords. His Government had inherited from their predecessors an Act to deprive the House of Lords of their position as Court of Ultimate Appeal for England, which was timed to come into force in November 1875. To meet the anomaly of separate Courts of Final Appeal for different parts of the country, Bills had been introduced to place Scotland and Ireland in the same position as England. There was, however, a strong party in both Houses who were of opinion that the best way of meeting the anomaly would be by restoring to the House of Lords their functions in the case of England. That Disraeli himself was not of this opinion is clear from a letter written on the subject to Lady Chesterfield:

The Judicature Bill was a legacy from our predecessors which we were obliged to adopt because the Peers had already parted with their judicature as regards *England;* and it seemed absurd to retain their supremacy for the comparatively insignificant appeals of *Ireland* and *Scotland.* All this will occasion us some trouble—but no danger. The Cabinet is united as one man and the business will end in a manner highly satisfactory to the country.

This letter, however, was written on March 11th, and Disraeli had been far less sanguine of the outcome only a few days earlier. On March 5th he had told the Queen that the circumstances were "rather critical," and he had

described the spirit of the Peers themselves as "high and somewhat unmanageable." The progress of his negotiations, interspersed with items of social and other political news, is told in his letters to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 3rd, 1875

These are terribly busy days, my darling friend, and there is much to do which I do with a heavy heart.

Kenealy, at twelve o'clock, is going to attack Evelyn Ashley for a breach of privilege which he has committed in some Isle of Wight speech. The Speaker has sent to me to be there to assist in the ceremony. But I don't think I shall go; as I have to meet the Peers at the Duke of Richmond's at two o'clock and try to bring the awful mess about the Judicature Bill into some order.

I dine to-day at Marlboro' House, having been obliged to throw over Lord Stanhope, which I regret, but after the absolute row about my former invitation to Marlboro' House and dining with the Speaker instead of the Prince, a refusal on my part now, might lead to some estrangement with the Prince, which is much to be deprecated.

Last night we at least showed that we have a working majority of eighty: I hope we may do as well to-morrow.

I shall delight in the Life of Christ; everybody talks of it and I have never even seen it. I delight in its being given to me by one I love so much as you.

The Faery was more than kind: my rooms were warm

and delightful; and in my audience, which was nearly an hour and a half, she asked me to be seated . . .

Remember me most kindly to Lady A. and love me always.

D

To his letter to Lady Bradford written on the same day, he added:

The meeting of the Peers is the most difficult thing I have ever had. It looks very dark.

To Lady Chesterfield

House of Commons,
6 o'clock, March 4th, 1875

My dearest Lady,

I write to you from the House, after having had an hour and a half of Kenealy, &c. I have not been able to get ten minutes, either to-day or yesterday, to write to you at any length, though there has been much to tell and much has happened.

Yesterday, I had to meet the Peers at the Duke of Richmond's and address them. They were and still are, to a certain degree, in a great mess about their Judicature Bill, and to-night will be interesting in the House of Lords. I have given them a plan of redemption which is bold, but the disease required such treatment. If we succeed I shall be a hero; and if we fail they will call me a quack.

I dined in the evening at Marlboro' House—a very agreeable party given to some Russians. I sate next a Princess,

whose name I can neither spell nor pronounce, but she was handsome and talked well. The Prince took her out and I sate, as directed, on her other side.

I have only five minutes to write, for the Lord Chancellor has sent for me; but to-morrow I may not be so pressed.

I have a great battle also commencing in my house; Goschen on his legs.

I have seen Selina yesterday for a few minutes and to-day not much longer. She is looking particularly well. I can say no more at present but I hope that I shall not be as unhappy as I too generally am.

I shall always love you who are the most darling friend that man ever had. I have not had time to thank you for the endless good things you send me.

Your most affectionate

D

Kenealy spoke well. It was an animated scene and House crowded.

On March 5th it came to Disraeli's knowledge that the problem of the Judicature Act would be brought before the House of Commons by Mr. Walpole, "with the view," as he told the Queen, "of practically rescinding the English Act that comes into play in November." And in his letter to Lady Bradford of the same date he made a further reference to the matter—"An ominous silence in the House of Lords; but the storm will burst, perhaps to-night, if they hear of Walpole's notice before they adjourn." The following day he wrote to Lady Chesterfield:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 6th, 1875

Beloved friend,

You did quite right in not speaking to Lady A. of that business. It might and, probably, would have done the greatest harm. I count always on your discretion.

You sent me a very pretty and graceful letter to-day. I am delighted always to hear from you, my very dear Lady C. whom I truly love; but I never wish you to write when it is an effort. I am so conceited that, if you do not send me a letter, I shall always try to believe you are thinking of me.

My Saturday has not been a very quiet one, for I had to call a Cabinet at 12 o'clock which lasted three hours. I was very exhausted when it was over, because I had not breakfasted, and when I returned an hour or so ago, I was greeted by a Bretby bird, more welcome then than the nightingale.

I am rather amused about your reading "Contarini Fleming." You think his travels more agreeable than the rest of his life? It is a long time since he was born—some years even before I had the pleasure of meeting you at Wycombe Abbey and fell in love with your brilliant eyes flashing with grace and triumph—and which could hardly spare a glance, then, to poor me. But I am rewarded for my early homage, and amid the cares of Empire can find solace in cherishing your sweet affections.

To-day I have a "banquet"; Schouvaloff and some forty others: Bradford was to have been one, but is obliged to send an excuse.

I am physically well: at least better than all my colleagues

who are all coughing. We shall have a toilsome and troublesome Session, I make no doubt; but I shall manage it.

I want, and welcome, public toil—for my sources of private happiness are very slight and not very satisfactory.

But I am always,

Your dear friend,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 8th, 1875

I must write to you when I can snatch a moment, my dearest friend, and this is rather early morn.

I am not afraid of the Judicature difficulty, but there will be a storm and it will burst soon. The Lord Chancellor will never leave me, or I am much mistaken—and my colleagues generally seem perfectly firm.

The "bad" news from India is a fabrication.

Henry Lennox announced last week that he had, or was going to resign; but since he heard that his resignation would be accepted, I am told he has changed his mind. I believe it must be settled this week.

There is a Court to-day; not a drawing-room, but a Court; which is a sort of miniature drawing-room. I do not know whether the Master of the Horse will be present, but Lady Bradford will. I shall see her though possibly not able to speak to her, which I regret; for my opportunities of seeing her daily diminish.

You forgot to tell me what it is in which you wish me to serve you. Pray do so.

The political difficulties sustain my spirit and I am rather

glad they have arrived, as my private life is dreary and depressing.

Think of me always with affection.

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 8th, 1875

I daresay there will be something worth hearing in the Lords to-day, for we have a sensational fortnight before us; but the Lord Chancellor is certainly not going to resign. I had two boxes awaiting me from Windsor when I returned from the Derbys, with whom I dined: a trio.

The Queen is much distressed about Helps. She says she is more isolated than ever and scarcely a friend left. I have cares enough and some sorrows—but it must have been the last which affected my countenance if it seemed changed. I shall be glad if I see you, or speak to you, to-day, at Court. It seems to me that I have not seen much of you of late and shall soon see less. When once the principle is admitted (and I doubt not inevitably) that I called too often, I always foresaw it would be impossible to draw a line and I should soon not call at all.

Yours ever,

D

"A very busy day," Disraeli wrote from the House of Commons on March 9th. "I have just come from my audience at Buckingham Palace. The Faery was most gracious and agreeable." Moreover he now felt happy about the trouble in the House of Lords—"The article in

the *Times* to-day is very weak, though it might have been very strong. It is all bluster; I shall do about the Judicature Bill exactly what I always intended to do." All these matters imposed a considerable strain upon the Prime Minister, and in addition to work of a strictly political nature were the official functions from which no Prime Minister could hope wholly to escape:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 10th, 1875

A most brilliant Levee. The Faery told me she should break away, and I thought I was bound to remain as long as she did. But an hour and a quarter elapsed and she did not move. I was just on the point of bolting, being really quite exhausted, when she snapped the golden chain and it was taken up by our host of the evening.

I have no dinner on Saturday, and shall be absolutely delighted to dine at 43 Belgrave Square.

Have you heard this? The three great objects of a lawyer:

1. To get on.
2. To get onner.
3. To get onest.

There is some fun in it. Told me by Derby in the royal circle.

Yours ever,

D

The Queen, indeed, showed Disraeli every consideration; and he must have been tempted to contrast the warmth of

her attitude towards him with what he regarded as the frequent displays of coldness on the part of Lady Bradford.

"The Faery writes to me three or four times a day, being in town," he told Lady Chesterfield on March 11th, "and her letters are worth reading. It is impossible for them to be more kind than they are to me." And again on the 13th—"The Faery wrote me a very pretty letter before she left town to thank me for my 'extreme kindness' and she went on, 'She has indeed had constant proofs of his extreme kindness and consideration for her feelings—and she needs such help and sympathy in her arduous and trying position.'" His mortification at his inability to see Lady Bradford as often as he wished is amply apparent from the temper of his letters:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 12th, 1875

It seems a very long time since we met, at least to have any conversation. I propose to call on you to-day at half past 2. If that does not suit your arrangements and plans, which probably it will not, I could get away from H. of C. at 6 o'clock or so, for it promises to be a long weary night of Irish discussion without division and without any necessity of my taking part in the debate.

I suppose your description of me at the Ball, as being amiable, brilliant and amused, is ironical—and very good irony; for I only came there to have the pleasure of seeing you and then vanished at a quarter past 12, feeling neither amiable nor amused.

As I had ordered my carriage at a quarter past 1 I was

in difficulties when I had got my cloak on, and had it not been for the courtesy of another guest who was also retiring, should have had to wait in the hall more than an hour. The guest was Gladstone! But he was saved from taking me home by somebody arriving in a cab, which I seized.

Yours ever,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 13th, 1875

If you please I would rather not lose my privilege of being your guest to-day. Indeed, I wonder I could entertain for a moment so silly a thought; I really see so very little of you now that I cannot afford to forfeit an occasion. Besides, I may never dine with you again. I could not take the responsibility of so great a sorrow!

My greatest social pleasure is dining with you and your family, and you and your family will be there. Moreover, though Bradford may not think it impertinent now—my declining—he might some day, when the adventitious circumstances had escaped his memory.

I forgot to mention I have a Cabinet at three, and afterwards, about a quarter to six, unless I hear to the contrary, I shall have the happiness of calling on you—for, though I shall see you in the evening, I may not be able to speak to you much—and I think there must be much to be said.

Yours ever,

D

The reference to the possibility of his foregoing his dinner party with the Bradfords is explained in a letter to Lady

Chesterfield—"I have a Cabinet at three o'clock; and I am to dine in Belgrave Square. It was doubtful, for they thought I should be bored with their guests who are chiefly colleagues and it certainly is, as a rule, not very refreshing, or pleasingly distracting, to quit a Cabinet to find the same Counsellors at dinner! With shop for conversation. But I do not go to see them."

When he forgot his irritation at his frequently frustrated hopes of seeing Lady Bradford he was amusing—"My new Dean preached," he wrote on March 15th. "Monty liked him; he never charmed me. What was good was his length—only twenty minutes, though a charity sermon. The plate brought to me was disgraceful. There were so many sixpences that it looked like a dish of whitebait." And on March 17th—"A great many things have happened since you were away. The Military Bill carried triumphantly through Committee; the return from Elba in the shape of Gladstone making a bad speech and getting licked by Hardy! The total discomfiture of the enemy's tactics of delay by my having a morning sitting *before* Easter; unprecedented—and not opposed, I suppose, from astonishment!" He had to see the Queen at Windsor, he added, but would call on his return on the chance of finding her at home. The frustration of this hope provoked a second letter the same evening.

10 Downing Street,
March 17th, 1875

I called, as I said, on my return from Windsor, and indulged in the hope that I might have found you, as you

had this impending, almost then immediate, engagement with your anonymous correspondent, who puzzles me, unless it be Lady Londonderry. I have a great deal to do here for the Queen and I have got a "Banquet" at 8 and new members of Parliament come before even the clock strikes. strikes.

It seems many days since I saw you—not since Saturday—with the exception of a few brief minutes. I feel very much not seeing you—not being dispirited, for I have no cause—but wanting sympathy, which I find only with you.

To-morrow is a very busy day and I could only come after luncheon—and on Friday I must go to the drawing-room; and from the D.R. to the H. of C. Thus a week glides away without communication. This seems to me somehow to be the result of your new system of limiting and regulating my visits.

I am not complaining, as I said I would never complain again. If one does, one is always misunderstood—which is ever my doom.

The Duke of Richmond who is the Pilot (I mean figuratively) of our express, expected to be at Paddington at half past 4, but all was deranged by the length of my audience which was more than three quarters of an hour. The Windsor courtiers are not used to these lengthy audiences—and indeed, my business on which I was summoned did not take 10 minutes.

Yours ever,

D

The pressure of business during the few remaining days before the House rose for the Easter recess was great—"I

was grieved I did not write to you yesterday," Disraeli observed to Lady Chesterfield on March 20th. "I never was so busy. One rises later now with these late sittings of the House of Commons. And then a prodigious quantity of boxes and Despatches and letters awaits one—and, then, when my most gracious Mistress is in town it seems to me that her letters never cease, and though she is one whom it is really a delight to serve, it takes both time and thought. And then there was a drawing-room which I was obliged to attend, and as I stand in the circle before the Queen, it is difficult to escape. But I was obliged to run away, and could scarcely change my costume in time for the House of Commons, in time for many duties, for I was in my seat from half past four to half past one in the morning getting on well with my measures. And so I could not find even a truant moment to send a word to dear you. And I had a Cabinet this morning at twelve!" Nevertheless he found time to write daily and at length to Lady Bradford:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 19th, 1875

There is no business of mark in the House of Commons this afternoon, so I shall call at Belgrave Square at 6, or about, on the chance of being admitted, which considering I am not to see you for many weeks, scarcely seems unreasonable.

The Faery wrote to me last night, about filling up the Constableship of the Tower which is in my gift. I should like to have it myself, which considering there is no salary and residence is required, does not seem rapacious. If I

could combine with this the Government of the Isle of Man, also vacant—a good salary, a beautiful spot and Parliament and many interesting accessories, I should be content, which is something.

Captain Moresby, the great discoverer, has arrived and writes to me to say he wishes to submit to me the charts of his discoveries and surveys in New Guinea. I can't refuse him, I fear, since he has christened a mountain, nearly as high as Mont Blanc, Mount Disraeli.

Lord E. Fitzmaurice has sent me his life of Lord Shelburne to which I am entitled, he says, "both as Buckinghamshire Prime Minister and as having first called attention to ye true position of Lord Shelburne in history." This is the book that Gladstone told Monty and myself some anecdote out of, round the fire in the hall at Marlboro' House.

Granville and Co. came down to hear my answers last night to the traitor Bart. Sir E. Wilmot, whom they had put up to ask a mischievous question about Judicature. They did not get much by the move.

I sent you a note of four lines which I trust reached you, though it may have been mislaid amid your fêtes and festivals.

Yours ever,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 20th, 1875

I was pleased by your letter which was consoling in my loneliness, and particularly as I had not written. That was impossible. I did not get home till half past one last night

and then I found another box from the Faery on that same subject—and the most difficult and perplexing business I ever well had.

It was necessary to write to her at great length and I did not get to bed till three—and slept badly—with a Cabinet at 12! I could hardly get to time; but did. After the Cabinet, for distraction I went and called on dear Ida, though I must not call her so in the hearing of Newport. That would have been successful and soothed me, only the Grosvenors came in almost immediately after me and I fled. Not knowing what to do, I went and called on the Duchess of —— who, I think, is the stupidest woman in England, and yet I remained there some time, for I felt something disagreeable awaited me at home.

Drawing-room at the Palace at 3.30 and the Duchess watching at her windows to see her Mistress, wondered why she went so late to-day and so on. I knew well enough—

However, all things ended well. I have just come home to find a narrative from D. most admirably written, and the enclosed which you must not show and which you must return. It's like a girl's letter after a quarrel! So sweet and hurried! not even in a box.

I envy you your visit to the historic home[1] and to have viewed it in your presence would have been an additional zest to me. It was a great disappointment to me not to go and I was mortified to observe that it never for a moment seemed to annoy you. However, I check myself; I said I would never make another captious remark—or at least, said it to myself, if not to you—and that is sacred. What is called "scolding"—if analysed, assuming very often a far

[1] Kimbolton.

gentler character—but you don't care to analyse the red-leaved tablets of my heart and so I let it pass.

Yours,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
March 21st, 1875

I wrote to you yesterday and I write to you to-day; though when we separated I did not contemplate doing either.

I have an authentic account of what took place at Lord Granville's. The subject was the Judicature Bill and some were very violent; "it ought to knock up any Government, &c." But when they discussed what was to be done and how we were to be attacked, they were lost in amaze. Ultimately, several schemes having been suggested but none of them approved by Lord Selborne, it was agreed that all should immediately depend upon my answer to the traitor Baronet, Sir Eardley Wilmot, and your lover, Granville, "gave up a day's hunting in order to be present when I spoke." He was in the Peers' Gallery under the clock and Harty-Tarty who, I suppose, has the happiness of being with you, said that "such a sell as my answer to Sir Eardley, is not on record," particularly to the huntsman. They are now all at sea—but they won't be long, as I suspect they will have enough of the Judicature Bill before they are many weeks older; *but this is the greatest of secrets.*

I did not like to trust D's letter to the post. It is most interesting and curious—nor in all probability will there be any opportunity in the hurry of your passage through town. It will keep till my next visit after your return from France, if you ever do return and if ever I pay you another visit.

These things much depend on habit, unless there is a very strong feeling, such as sincerely actuated me when, last year, I said I could not contemplate life without seeing you every day. I feel now very much like poor King Lear with his knights; half my retinue was cut down before you went to Kimbolton; "three times a week" was then accorded me. When you return from your foreign travel, which wonderfully clears the brain of former impressions, there will be a further reduction of my days till, at last, the dreary and inevitable question comes, "Why one?"

Don't misunderstand this. This is not what you call "scolding." It is misery—that horrible desolation which the lonely alone can feel. I will compensate you by a moment's amusement.

What do you think was the number of Valentines distributed in the London District on the last day of the Saint? I have a good mind to make you guess, but this would be cruel, as you would not have the opportunity of amusing your fellow guests. It is incredible. A good bit above two millions! It cost nearly £1000 for extra labor to distribute them, but the stamps cost £10,000 so there was enough to spare. I have the returns before me from the Post Office. In the country the numbers were unknown, but £14,000 was, I believe, throughout the U.K. expended in extra labor.

My kindest regards to Bradford and Lady Mabel, and I am

Yours,

D

I have given this morning the Constableship of the Tower to General Sir Chas. Porter, G.C.B. I keep the Isle of Man still open—open till you have quite broken my heart.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Tuesday, March 23rd, 1875

I will call at one. I should not have ventured, had it not been for your letter, as I fear there are many who will think me an intruder.

I could not tell you about the Prince going to Italy, because my letter to you on Sunday was, of course, written before I saw H.R.H. at half past 8. He is going to Mentone, "the first warm place" he said. He offered to take me with him for my holidays, which were to have been passed at Sandringham. I respectfully declined, but offered to go to India with him. 'Tis about his leg, which is sometimes excruciating.

Jarnac's death has really shaken me to the centre. In that tomb is a friendship of nearly forty years. He was one of your lovers and one, perhaps the only one, of whom I was not jealous. His last words to me were about you and a dinner which was to have been delightful. As a political loss it is great. The French have really no-one left to send to us. I send you some papers (only one) which came to me in the House of Commons.

I have mislaid the official announcement to me from the Foreign Office, which I regret. It gives some details. He died at 6 o'clock.

Yours,

D.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Wednesday, March 24th, 1875

I brought Bradford yesterday the enclosed letter from Lady Wilton, but forgot to leave it with you. If he does

not know the circumstances they will interest him, for it is one, I should think, of the most curious accidents of the hunting field.

I also brought you a letter from "Susan" [2] who does not write with the gay grace and facility of one who is, fortunately, my more frequent correspondent.

The holidays were secured last night. The Session has not lasted 7 weeks. We have passed the Military Bill; nearly the Artisans Dwellings Bill; the Mutiny Bill; and greatly advanced our Estimates—and the Lords have passed the Land Transfer Bill and yet the followers of Harty-Tarty say we have done nothing.

Yours ever,

D

One remark, enshrining a truth not always realised, he made on the eve of the adjournment in a letter to Lady Chesterfield—"My dinner yesterday did not much please me, though it was a pretty house, with one whom the world could describe as a pretty hostess . . . but the guests had no real metal in them, *and chaff is a poor substitute for wit.*" He added a little cynically that the ladies "sparkled only in their dress."

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[2] Lady Wharncliffe.

CHAPTER XIII

March–May 1875

SUCCESSES AT HOME AND ABROAD

Disraeli wanted rest and had intended spending Easter alone at Hughenden. No sooner had he got there, however, than he received a summons from the Queen:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
March 27th, 1875

Dearest Lady,

I received by post your interesting letter this morning, and by messenger this moment a parterre of Violets and a remedy for mine eye. What great and varied kindness!

You are also a prophetess, for the Faery has just telegraphed that I must go to Windsor at once and stay till Monday. It does not suit me. I have had a great deal of agitation in my private thoughts of late—and I require entire solitude which I find here, to brace my mind and to strengthen my will.

I did not know the silver fir gave ruby cones: I thought that was peculiar to the Larch. We are not a bit more advanced here than you are. But though there are no leaves, the place is wondrous green and I am rather rich in ancient evergreens. 'Tis the land of the yew, the holly and

the box; and I have planted, during the last 30 years, a great quantity of new and rare conifers. But what delights me most, is that my stream, which runs entirely through my place and which 3 or 4 dry summers had terribly attenuated, is brimming full and, though not quite as broad as the Trent, it gives life to the landscape. A park without water is like a *salon* without a mirror.

I shall hope to write you a line from Windsor whither I depart in an hour. Whitsun is too far to think of: at least for me—but I fear there is little chance of being your guest then.

Ever, dearest friend,
Your affectionate

D

At Windsor Disraeli was entertained by the royal family:

This is a family party [he told Lady Bradford]; the Princess of Wales, the Christians, Princess Beatrice and Prince Leopold with a sprinkle of courtiers in attendance, made the dinner yesterday. I sate next Princess Christian whom I had not seen since I drank tea with her in Belgrave Square. Prince Leopold sate on the other side of his sister, watched our conversation with keen interest and sometimes joined in it—always with point and information. . . .

The Queen was in high spirits and wanted to know all dinner what Princess Christian and Prince Leopold were laughing at. As I never laugh at my own remarks my head was safe, and Her Majesty could scarcely decapitate her own children. But I heard her say in German, smiling, "What is he saying?" After dinner the Princess of Wales accosted me

and said—"You believe in sympathy, so I come to you. You know all about this Indian business. *I want to go.* I trust to you to manage it for me!" You must keep this entirely to yourself except, of course, to Bradford.

He was not very complimentary to the royal stationery—"It is a great labor to write this letter, for the ink is mud and the pens might have been bought in the street." Before leaving he received an invitation to go on to Crichel; but he declined:

I shall return to Hughenden where I have things to amuse me. I have got some more portraits and I arrange them, which diverts me. I have got a portrait of Tita—a colored drawing by McClise, which was done at my father's in 1836 and which is admirable. It was sold at McClise's sale. And a good copy of the 14th Earl of Derby by Grant. The portraits are the history of my life—I shall have one of my dear friend Lyndhurst coming soon and one of Lord Cairns.

I am going to put Lady Ches. in the Salon. I wish very much that Bradford would let me have a portrait of you as a pendant. It would be very kind of him and I should be much touched by it. I want these portraits to be the history of my life. *Entre nous,* but very much *entre nous,* my dear and royal mistress here is going to give me hers.

I am writing with only one eye; excuse, therefore, spelling.

On his return to Hughenden he had one item of news to communicate to Lady Bradford in Paris, which he did, we may be sure, with sardonic satisfaction: "Not only Mitchell is dead, but his brother-in-law, Martin, who went to his fu-

neral. Treason does not flourish. Martin, in the House, was a troublesome bore." He wrote at greater length to Lady Chesterfield:

Hughenden Manor,
March 30th, 1875

Dearest Lady Chesterfield,

I returned here yesterday with a cold, notwithstanding all my care, but I had to face the Corridor at Windsor which, I think, can't be less than 1,000 feet long—five times a day (that was exercise) with blasts from every opening in my progress (that was air).

I did not return smothered with flowers, though the Faery was most gracious and is going to give me her portrait for Hughenden. For a long time I wrote, almost every day, to three ladies; one of them has given me her portrait; another has promised me her portrait; the third has not only not given me her portrait, but prevented another person from giving it to me. I should have placed the two sisters in the Salon, each on one side of our Sovereign.

But if I brought no flowers from Windsor I found plenty at Hughenden, for the house was radiant with your violets ranged in hall and library in glass baskets. They were quite fresh and look so even now. They were not certainly as sweet as they were beautiful; but the Queen says it is difficult now to get violets that are perfumed. Her Majesty does not attribute this to want of sun, which most people do, but to the gardeners, who have no feeling for sweet scents and would sacrifice every charm of the kind to size and color. She said, also, they had spoiled strawberries from the same cause.

I quite sympathise with you about your lake; for I wandered yesterday a long time by my stream, and its gurgling was ravishing.

Your letter was most amusing and your account of the Islington Evangelists full of life. I dare say they will have many followers. What may not be expected from a nation that believes in "Tichborne" and Joanna Southcott![1]

The Queen goes to Osborne on the 2nd April and she will return to Windsor on the 23rd. She will go up to town for two drawing-rooms the first week in May and will start for Balmoral on the 11th May, "D.V."

Adieu! dear friend,

D

From Paris Lady Bradford wrote asking for news of Disraeli's last visits to that City:

You ask me when I was in Paris last; I have looked here and see it was in 1856, after the Crimean War. From 1842 to 1848 we went every year; a sort of friendship having occurred between myself and King Louis Philippe who made Paris very delightful to us. As I also had known the Emperor I have no doubt he would have been equally kind to us; but there seemed to me something base, after sharing for years the hospitality of the Orleans family, to be present at the fêtes and festivals of their triumphant rival. After

[1] A servant woman born in 1750 who claimed later in life to be a prophetess and whose followers were believed to number at one time 100,000. Her most daring announcement was that she was destined to be the mother of the Prince of Peace, whose birth she foretold for October 1814. The fact that she died of dropsy a few weeks only after her expected deliverance was not enough to discredit her with some at least of her followers; for congregations of them were still in existence in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

more than seven years' quarantine we thought we might venture quietly over, and not being then a Minister, it did not seem indispensable that we should be presented. So things went on very quietly for a few days in a sunny hotel on the Terrace of the Rivoli with no cares but milliners' bills, when lo and behold! one day when we returned home, we found an Imperial command to dine at the Tuileries; and in eight and forty hours I was banqueting there, sitting next to the Empress and Lady Beaconsfield next to the Emperor. So I saw a good deal of him that year. The man I always liked; he was good natured and good hearted and good tempered, with a dash of sentiment in his temper which I always rather relish. But he had a terrible weakness; he was not a man of honor. In fact, that character is rather rare out of England. At least I have found it so in life, and I have seen not a little of Sovereigns and Ministers.

The Easter recess was a brief one, and on Monday, April 5th, Disraeli returned to London. "I think I foresee a somewhat agitating Session," he told Lady Bradford, "though I have no fear for the result." And on April 8th he wrote in high spirits to Lady Chesterfield:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 8th, 1875

Yes! I mean to conquer even the *Times* in which you all so superstitiously believe and which, two months ago, recommended me to give up the Merchant Shipping Bill and carry the Agric!!!

So much for the *Times*.

I mean to carry both.

Yesterday was all triumph.

This morning at 12 a Cabinet; at 2, House of Lords and second Reading of Merchant Shipping Bill: a great debate.

But the real fight will be Monday when in Committee they will try to substitute Plimsoll for my Bill, and I mean to beat them to sticks and then wind up.

I have not a moment.

Your loving

D

For all his boisterous optimism, however, the matter was not managed without an infinity of trouble; and the following day he wrote to Lady Chesterfield in much more sober mood:

I have had the greatest trouble about the Merchant Shipping Bill, a measure of first-class importance. Those who had to manage it had got matters into such an imbroglio that I was obliged to throw myself into the breach and get up the whole case, and then see and manage all sorts of wrongheaded or incapable and mischievous persons.

He explained his difficulties in greater detail to Lady Bradford:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 10th, 1875

I suppose that you may have returned from Fontainebleau and that you will rest at Paris for 4 and 20 hours at least, before you set off for Turin: so this will reach you. I

enclose, I believe, for I have not had time to look at it, a stupidish *Spectator;* but you asked for it and one likes to be obeyed. I have to thank you for several letters which I did not, apparently, deserve, and I marvel how you can maintain your correspondence and find a moment for me.

This has been a week of immense labor and some anxiety —though of more excitement. It would be impossible in a letter, and particularly the hurried things I scrawl to you, to convey to you the slightest idea of what has occurred which has not been on the surface. The Merchant Shipping Bill, a measure necessarily of great importance, was the cause. Before I left town I was confidentially informed that there were rocks ahead, that Adderley had quarrelled with all his office, that he was disliked by his own party in the House, that they would not support the Government measure, but Plimsoll, who is a Moody and Sankey in politics; half rogue and half enthusiast. That is to say, one of those characters who live by pandering to passion and fall into an enthusiastic love and admiration of themselves. I took certain measures to put things right before I left town, and delegated the rest to Northcote who generally succeeds. But alas! not in this case. I had a bad Despatch at Hughenden and when I got to town, the Bill being fixed for second reading on Thursday evening, I found perfect anarchy. I won't go on with a long story, for I have other things to tell you if I have time. Sufficient to say I was obliged to undertake the management of the whole case—a vast and most complicated case and of which, then, I knew little. Besides this, I have had to give constant interviews to the confused, the refractory and the vacillating. After the Cabinet on Wednesday, I was obliged to give myself to this work instead of

writing to the Queen, as I had promised, and I did not get things really right—in order—until 4 o'clock on Thursday afternoon—so that they were painting the scenes as the curtain drew up. But the result was most triumphant. Adderley, who is after all a gentleman and who has been, and may be yet, the victim of a cabal, behaved very well—and made a discreet opening address. We not only carried the second reading, but carried it without a division, and Plimsoll had to leave the house, being desperately ill—probably from chagrin. Then the enemy, finding they could not successfully oppose the Bill, tried to adjourn the debate, which would have been most injurious to us; but I coaxed the house into carrying my point.

The mismanagement of his colleagues and the attacks of the Opposition were not the only sources of embarrassment at this time; for the smooth progress of Disraeli's social legislation was being further hampered by a number of extraneous questions of an annoying if not of a very serious nature, which claimed the attention of the House of Commons. "We have had some troublesome privilege questions," he told Lady Chesterfield on April 17th, "the worst of which is usually, that it is difficult to stop them and time is wasted." Among a number of questions of this kind which cropped up during the Session, two in particular were responsible for prolonged debates extending over several days. The first arose out of a succession of attempts made by Dr. Kenealy, M.P., counsel for the defense in the famous Tichborne case—the Queen *v.* Castro—to secure a re-trial of his client, the claimant, who had been convicted

and sentenced to penal servitude. A petition presented to Parliament with this object in view having been discharged on the ground of a breach of privilege, after a prolonged discussion on April 15th and 16th,[2] Dr. Kenealy moved on April 23rd for the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the conduct of the trial. On the division only one Member, Mr. P. O'Gormon, was found willing to join the tellers, Dr. Kenealy and Mr. G. H. Whalley, and the Motion was rejected by a majority of 432. The other was the outcome of the publication by the *Times* and the *Daily News* of a letter written by M. Herran, the Honduras Minister in Paris, to Sir R. Lowe, M.P., as Chairman of a Select Committee on Foreign Loans, in which aspersions were cast upon the conduct of a Member of the House, Mr. Bedford Pim. Discussion of the particular issue gave rise to a Motion by Lord Hartington on May 4th, by which he sought to restrict to some extent the unfettered discretion of the House of Commons to exclude strangers—and among them representatives of the press—from their proceedings. Disraeli refused to countenance any such proposal and insisted on the rights of the House of Commons in such matters being maintained intact. The Motion was, consequently, defeated and the Leader of the House called down upon himself the wrathful condemnation of the *Times*.[3] Though irritated by the waste of time, Disraeli was jubilant at his various successes:

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[2] See forward, Disraeli's letter to Lady Bradford of April 19th.

[3] See forward, Disraeli's letters to Lady Chesterfield of April 19th and May 7th.

To Lady Bradford

April 19th, 1875

. . . We had a triumphant night in the House of Commons and got out of a scrape into which the Speaker, who, between ourselves, appears to be always wrong on these questions of privilege, had led us. The night before, on the famous Orton-Kenealy petition, he insisted to me that the petition ought to be rejected on the grounds of its imputations against the judges—and that the part referring to himself should not be introduced. As I took quite a contrary opinion, I was obliged to bring the matter before the Cabinet, and the Lord Chancellor after great trouble gave it as his opinion that the Speaker was entirely wrong, and that the only breach of privilege was the notice, in a petition, of his own imputed words. Had we followed the Speaker's advice I believe the Government would have actually been beaten, and certainly greatly discredited in the country.

Yours,

D

As it was, all went well, and he dashed off a pæan of victory to Lady Chesterfield:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 19th, 1875

The *Times* does not know what to say for itself after its furious articles about the press and Parliamentary privilege, and its announcement that I had proved incapable to the occasion and that the press must be, and would be, recognised and admitted, by an overwhelming majority. They

can only snort and make desultory captious little remarks about speeches and speakers. The long and short of it is, my dearest, that the Opposition have received such a crushing defeat that does not happen once in ten years.

And he could not resist the temptation of a little mild chaff at the expense of Maria, Marchioness of Ailesbury, Lady Chesterfield's friend and Gladstone's admirer:

I am sorry the children are leaving you, but very glad that Lady A. is at Bretby. You can't be dull with her, and Selina says she is the most affectionate of friends and never changes. I think she is agreeable and never wearies, which is quite as important. Tell her from me with my kind regards that I regret, for her sake, the Government is so strong; but I can't help it. Her friend Gladstone, instead of retiring to Mount Athos, has taken another house in Carlton Terrace; so I suppose he has had enough of spiritual things.

News was equally good when he wrote to Lady Bradford on April 20th:

Never was such a night in House of Commons as the last. The House being exhausted we pushed on and carried our Bills with wondrous progress; but I did not get to what is called "my couch" till three. All is flourishing felicity except the Bismarck disorder—want of sleep. No; no; "no one to sing me to slumber," or soothe with a word of love. What is it all without that? . . . I cannot miss seeing you to-day; I am sure the times are at hand when I shall see you rarely. Let me revel before the shipwreck!

But the "Bismarck disorder" was a danger:

We shall now have nothing but late nights [he told Lady Chesterfield the next day], and it will be a wearying Session; but I am well enough—a little jaded from want of sleep. I always have a little soup ready for me, in case I return at the small hours—like the *tartine* of the Bourbons, in case they wake hungry in the middle of the night.

And there was always the uncertainty of his relations with Lady Bradford to cause him uneasiness:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
April 27th, 1875

I am not capricious; and though I have many faults, I have none towards you. There, at least, my conscience is clear.

I wrote the other day that it would probably end in my conduct being misinterpreted, because having a padlock on my mouth when we were together, and a padlock on my pen when we were separated, misconceptions must arise. If I saw you and it were possible calmly to refresh myself—for no one more shrinks from scenes—I hope I could show that I have not been capricious; whether the result of our meeting would, in any other sense, be satisfactory is another thing. But when can I see you? When I am free, you must go out. I could call at 3 o'clock, but it may be a last interview, and I don't want to be interrupted; and to-morrow I have an early Cabinet and the same domestic reason may prevent your receiving me after it. Write one word.

D.

A meeting resulted in the resumption of a better understanding:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 3rd, 1875

This note is to remind you that you must be prepared for a renewal of your daily tax on your patience.

I sent the glass, that you might try it before you decide. I want to give something to that fascinating little Queeny [4] and her delicious little sister—and I want you to advise me what it shall be. It must be something very good, not a mere toy that they will destroy—but something that may, perhaps, make them remember "the Primo" hereafter. Pray help me when we meet.

I sate next to Lady Cork yesterday, who was most witty; as good as a scene in Congreve. I remember her handsome; but she was always hard, which does not suit me; I like something more like Cleopatra. On my other side was Lady Howard of Glossop who is not hard and yet very shrewd.

Yours ever,

D

The remaining days of this portion of the Session until Disraeli left London on May 14th, for Hughenden, where he spent the brief Whitsuntide holiday, were strenuous but more than usually successful. They were tinged with anxiety, however, by the threat of trouble on the Continent where Bismarck's aggressive attitude, not towards

[4] Selina's granddaughter, the Hon. Beatrice Bridgeman, afterwards Lady Beatrice Pretyman. The gifts eventually chosen were a watch and a locket.

France only, was being viewed with growing apprehension. Disraeli was determined to make it clear that Great Britain was a Power to be reckoned with in the affairs of Europe; and the hopes and fears of his swiftly changing moods are reflected in his letters. The measure of his success is to be found in the message, tinged with irony though it assuredly was, from Bismarck, referred to by Disraeli in his letter to Lady Bradford of May 14th. In the meantime his letters give a graphic account of events at home and abroad:

To Lady Chesterfield

Confidential

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 5th, 1875

Public affairs are so grave and pressing that I can hardly command my mind to write a private letter—even to you.

I am now going to the Faery who has much to make her disquieted. Bismarck is playing the game of the old Bonaparte; then I must go to the House of Commons and blow into the air the conspiracy of the Liberals, the Fenians, and the *Times* newspaper, their organ, to discredit and eventually to destroy H.M. Government. They will find both results a little more difficult than they imagine. I have no doubt I shall baffle and beat them down; but I have got a little gout which is not very agreeable under such circumstances.

I went to Selina's reception last night. It was very pretty and gay and she looked beautiful. The house is detestable and not fit for a noble of position.

Your affectionate,

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 5th, 1875

. . . The Faery has sent for me to-morrow at Buckingham Palace at half past three.

The Opposition is very troublesome, but you will see I shall get my way. "Patience and shuffle the cards." If we could only have divided last night we should have had 100 majority against Harty, and then we might have arranged the affair. But it will be arranged, and well.

Yours ever,

D

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 7th, 1875

My dearest friend,

Don't give up the *Times* newspaper, for that will deprive you of a great deal of pleasure—among other gratifications the delight of seeing them, in due time, eat all their words and congratulate me upon a triumphant Session.

I gave them what they call "a piece of my mind," when the House met yesterday. Gladstone was furious, although there never was a Leader who treated the House in a more domineering spirit than himself. All I can tell you is that the lecture was not fruitless; the Irish let the Committee close at an early hour and we then made great progress with one of our Sanitary Bills, measures which the Liberals particularly wished to prevent passing.

All the trash in the *Times* about the time wasted by

feebly dealing with Privilege and Irish Coercion, I blew into the air by facts which no one could contradict. As it is, we have passed the Army Exchange Bill, the Artisans' Dwellings Bill which was our chief measure of the Session, and in a few days we shall have passed the Irish Bill.

They are going to attack our Budget to-night, but I prophesy they will not even dare to divide on the question.

I was with the Faery yesterday who was charming, though somewhat excited about Foreign Affairs. Bismarck is really another old Bonaparte again and he must be bridled.

The Queen wanted a Minister, as usual, to come down to her on Sunday and sleep at the Castle. I thought it would not be a bad thing if I could induce Carnarvon to go. It might do him good; and I have succeeded.

Love me always. D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 8th, 1875

Last night was to have witnessed the destruction of the Government—an attack on our whole line led on by Achilles himself. Never were assailants so completely overthrown. There was really a flutter of fear along our benches, which were crowded when Gladstone rose. We have many new members and they had heard so much of G. that they trembled. The great man spoke for two hours; but it was the return from Elba. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, our little Northcote, originally G.'s private secretary, followed him and I can truly say, annihilated him in one of the most vigorous speeches that ever was made by a man, master of his subject. Lowe tried to rally the affair and I put up

Hunt to answer him. It did not require great gifts to do that, for Lowe made a stammering affair of it. Then the most curious part of all—every finance authority on the Liberal side spoke for the Government and by the time I had intended to rise to sum up the question, the House had nearly vanished. Never was such a collapse. Enough members, however, remained to help us to get through a great deal of business—and whether it be what I said in the House, or not, all I know is that we have done more business during the last 8 and 40 hours than for the last fortnight.

I venture to prophesy to you, and only to you, that my declamation of the other night will turn out to be another Bath letter.[5]

Let me know how you are? where you go to-night? how your party was yesterday? . . .

Yours ever,

D

On May 9th Disraeli informed Lady Chesterfield of the arrival of Count Schouvaloff, the newly appointed Russian Ambassador. "Affairs are very critical," he wrote; "but I am more than hopeful about them. . . . The three Emperors meet at Berlin to-morrow. They will be together two days at least." On May 11th he had more successes in the House of Commons to record:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 11th, 1875

We had a capital night in the Commons; got the Irish Bill through Report which might have taken three days and

[5] See p. 34.

I fixed, without difficulty, a morning sitting for to-day, when it will be read a third time and probably without any lengthened debate. If so, I shall use the rest of the morning for pushing on another Bill. No news yet from Berlin.

I shall hope to see you about six. Separation, with all its horrors, is again hanging over us. My life seems to pass in saying farewell. I hope your dinner and your Ball were successful. From what I know of the house, I don't think the first promised. I do not approve of prints in dining-rooms. Essentially middle-classish and not in keeping with crimson footmen. This is a strong observation and does not refer to where you dined yesterday; like a bit of Angela Pisani, belongs to another chapter.

Ever,

D

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 12th, 1875

My dearest,

We shall have peace. I was most vexed at not being able to write to you yesterday; but between Peace and War and the Irish Bill I was much pressed. The news from Berlin came in the middle of the night on Monday; but they wisely did not wake me. However, it gave me an appetite for breakfast.

I carried the third reading of the Irish Bill with comparative ease. The holidays will only be half a dozen days and I must go to Hughenden where affairs are in some disorder, as always happens with absentees. The holidays are too short to cut into two visits. I must forgo dear Bretby

and its dearer mistress. Selina is flying away and, I fear, for a longer time. I see very little of those I love. This makes me unhappy. I count however on seeing her at the State Concert to-night.

Your most affect.

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 14th, 1875

I was kept so late at Windsor yesterday, for there was much to do—five men to be knighted and Bute to be ribboned, and a Council, and an audience of nearly an hour—that I was not in time for the House of Commons; and that, with something pressing for the Faery, made it 7 o'clock before I could collect my scattered nerves and try to think of my absent friends. And now I am writing to them with the railway whistle almost in hearing, for I am trying to get off by an earlyish train and see whether fresh air will do me some good.

I must cram interesting and important matters in what is only a hurried note. The Faery did not like the new peerage [6] (on personal grounds), and though I pressed it much, would not yield. She would think of it, and, finally, I might write to her about it &c., &c. I was much annoyed, and the moment I could get clear of the House of Commons I wrote to her and sent it by a special messenger, so that she might digest it during her dreams to Balmoral and feel some remorse.

I went to bed early—at 11 o'clock—being indisposed, and

[6] Lord Grey de Wilton, son of the Earl of Wilton. See vol. II, p. 262.

can you believe it?—at half past 11 Mr. Baum disturbed me with "a box from the Queen, immediate." Here are the contents, not to be breathed to human being except, of course, Bradford, who is, I know, very safe. It was an immense relief to me. I have 1,000 things to say; but I have no time. I was very much amused and pleased at the Concert, but I fear I "caught" a fresh cold there, though I don't believe in such things.

We did more business in the House of Commons last night than in an usual fortnight.

Prince Bismarck has sent a message to me and Derby thanking us for our interference, and glad to see England taking an interest in continental affairs again. I believe, since Pam, we have never been so energetic, and in a year's time we shall be more.

Yours,

D.

The box from the Queen which disturbed Disraeli conveyed her consent, apparently, to his importunate recommendation for the peerage; for in his letter to Lady Chesterfield written on May 14th, occurs the following—"Grey de Wilton is to be called to the Upper House. As the Bath Letter, which everybody believes in now—though nobody did at the time—was addressed to him, his merits ought to be recognised." In the same letter he pictured for his correspondent the fate that awaited him at home—"I will write to you, dear darling, from Hughenden where I have to meet a church in ruins, a rebellious priest and other troubles. May you never have any such."

CHAPTER XIV

May–June 1875

WARFARE IN THE COMMONS

Disraeli fled for rest to Hughenden. But trouble followed him. "A few nights ago," he wrote Lady Chesterfield, on May 17th, "all Lady Churchill's jewels were robbed from an Albemarle Street hotel, where she has put up for many years; and a little while ago Lady Waterpark lost all her jewels. 'Two of my ladies!' the Queen indignantly exclaims; 'the police must be very inefficient. It is a disgrace to the Country!'" Nevertheless the Queen's letter was couched in the most friendly terms. "I write to you first," Disraeli remarked in his letter of May 17th, to Lady Bradford, "and many must wait till to-morrow. Titania among them! The most wonderful letter from that quarter I have yet received." The few days which he was able to spend quietly in the country were beneficial:

To Lady Chesterfield

Hughenden Manor,
May 19th, 1875

Dear Darling,

I must write you a hurried line; a poor return for your agreeable letters.

I can give a good account of myself which I could not

have done three days ago; but my Medico came opportunely and did me a great deal of good; so I walked to-day nearly three miles and returned without the least sense of fatigue. Half of this would have knocked me up when I arrived here.

I am here like a man on a desert isle: Robinson Crusoe before he found "Friday." The sound of human voice is strange to me; but I have plenty of public work and in the evening I read Gil Blas. What a book! It is human nature itself. I read it when a boy for the adventures: now I read it after a large and varied experience of existence and relish every line.

I go to town to-morrow where I shall not love you more than I do here.

D

The Queen was anxious about the projected visit of the Prince of Wales to India, and would have welcomed its abandonment:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
May 19th, 1875

. . . This post, which brings me your letter, also brings me the resignation of Lord Pembroke. I wish you could take his place—you have wits enough; and if you did not quarrel with the Prime Minister, affairs might go on very well.

I have a most extraordinary letter from the Faery to-day, with a copy of one she has addressed to Lord Northbrook.[1]

[1] Then Viceroy of India.

She dies hard and will prevent the Indian visit, if possible, yet.

I go to town to-morrow; in tolerable cue. I hate to write about myself; but what else can I write about? I have been here nearly a week and have not interchanged a syllable with any human being. My personal attendant (Baum), though sedulous and sometimes even honest, is of a sullen and supercilious temperament and never unnecessarily opens his mouth. This I think a recommendation. Work has been brisk, especially foreign; but we have been very successful in all we attempted and the result will, I trust, encourage to greater results in time.

On his return to London Disraeli found his staff disorganised—Monty Corry indisposed; his second secretary, Algernon Turnor, in bed with the prospect of rheumatic fever; and his third secretary, Jem Daly, away—"said to be in the Channel Isles!" And he had an awkward question to answer, "about some indiscreet stuff the German Ambassador has been spouting—at my next door neighbor's—the National Club." Yet even now he had not plumbed the depths of his embarrassments:

To Lady Bradford

10 Downing Street,
May 20th, 1875

One wants sympathy in one's misfortunes and therefore I naturally fly to you. I wrote to you hurriedly on my arrival in town this morning. I told you how I was situated with my three secretaries. But I did not know the extent

of my embarrassment. Mr. Dyke, the head of my staff and a first-rate man for the place, has been dancing during the holidays in red and green, or red and green stockings, and has been poisoned by the arsenic which produces these brilliant tints. I never wanted him more. I had left him 1,000 things to arrange for the campaign and I go into the field to-day without an aide-de-camp that I can trust.

I was amused by what you wrote about ladies and their jewels, and I was reminded at the time of a little trait which in the haste and hurry of Hughenden correspondence, I omitted to tell you. You remember poor Lady Poltimore, who had once been a sort of beauty and always thought she was deeply interesting? In the latter years of her career, she always figured in a most splendid pearl necklace (real ropes of pearls). Duchess of Cleveland said, looking at her, "A pearl necklace like that is not a bad thing to fall back on!"

I have written two letters to you to-day, one to the Faery and none to Bretby; but I shall try to-morrow. I cannot bear to neglect her, but have the satisfaction to feel she is not alone. She is to have two days of you; more than I have in a month with all the odds and ends and snatches of time put together, and yet I am

Your devoted

D

The Queen wrote frequently and at considerable length and upon all sorts of subjects; and Disraeli did not always find it easy to satisfy her many requirements:

I have a long letter this morning from the Faery [he told Lady Bradford on May 21st] about vivisection which

she insists upon my stopping as well as the theft of ladies' jewels. I think she is the most artless person, in her style, I ever corresponded with. She wrote to me the other day on the slaughter of young seals, with a printed description of the horrors and sufferings of the parents which she cut out of a newspaper. I never read anything so harrowing. I have made the Board of Trade bring in a Bill to establish a close time for the seal fishery. It has passed the House of Commons and I doubt not will become law. But to render it generally effective we must combine with foreign nations.

But the intimacy of his relations with the Queen always tended to set his thoughts wandering in other directions:

It seems to me another year and another world since we were together. I suffer much from it, for I require sympathy; but male sympathy does not suit me and I am fastidious as to the other sex. You suit me exactly for you have quickness of perception and tact, and I have the advantage of your judgment in conversation without the formality of consulting you. You have never asked for anything, but you have given Colville a ribbon and made Jersey a lord-in-waiting, and done some other things besides. . . . My life is every day more lonely, and I see so little of you that the consciousness of your existence has for me the sense only of some charming dream—though I cannot be too grateful for your letters.

He knew how little welcome were letters in this strain, and he tried to write more cheerfully:

But I won't be pensive. Did you read the account in the *Times* of His Grace of Holyrood? sent up, of course, by himself. And did you observe the marriage of W—— H—— with Lucretia Borgia? The advertisement was put in the papers by the mother of Mrs. E—— who was resolved that the crime should be known to the world.

But the sense of his isolation would not be denied, and two days later he wrote:

You never mention the day of your return, and if it were not for your banquet I should believe I and the metropolis were never to see you again. Half the year has elapsed and considering all things we have met rarely; and now the other moiety is approaching when we shall never see each other. You can bear this, but to me it is very depressing who dote on your existence. Things go on well enough; but in your absence it is like rising every day to a sunless sky. . . . I don't think you have thought much of me during our separation, or very kindly—at least I feel so; and being physically desponding, this adds to my comparative prostration.

Sometimes he sought sympathy from Lady Chesterfield:

Affairs go on very well [he wrote on May 23rd]. If I were happy in my private life I should consider myself the most fortunate of men. But the only persons who interest me I rarely, or never, see.

And again on May 25th:

You are alone, and so am I. So far as feeling is concerned, my life is almost as solitary as your own. Selina

will return to town to-day, but I shall not see her till to-morrow. I know what it is when she arrives after an absence and when she receives the homage of the various branches of the House of Bridgeman.

Even when the longed-for meeting at last took place, it was not without interruption:

I went to Selina this morning [he wrote on May 26th], and it was a right happy meeting after so long a separation. But, alas! quantities of Bridgemans called and stayed when we thought we were the only people in London. But we had time to talk a little about you as well as ourselves; and all other subjects may keep till to-morrow when I hope to see her again.

"All other subjects" embraced a variety of matters as may be gathered from the scraps of news which had found mention in his letters during the previous few days:

I made Lord Cadogan very happy yesterday [he had written in a letter to Lady Bradford on May 23rd] by appointing him Under Secretary for War. But I fear I have made a great many others very unhappy in consequence; and Hardwicke, the least fitted for the place, will be the most dissatisfied. He got the Prince of Wales to speak to me in his favor. It is a curious thing, but there has not been a place, or a living of importance, in my gift that H.R.H. has not asked me for one of his friends—and always the most unqualified candidates. But because the Prince is good-natured, I must not be silly. And I think

the reputation of a Minister depends more on his appointments than any other circumstance.

Later the same day he had a further item of news of some importance:

I forgot to tell you in your letter which is now sealed, that I heard from the Faery this morning, enclosing copy of the Emperor of Russia's answer from Ems to Her Majesty's letter—very interesting.

"Yesterday was a great party fight," he told Lady Chesterfield on May 25th, "and strange to say the Opposition absolutely thought they were on the eve of victory." He described the event in greater detail to Lady Bradford:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 25th, 1875

"The horrid nonsense" of the *Daily News,* was a grand cannonade under which an attack was to be made on the whole line—and strange to say, on the part of the Opposition with great confidence of success. I have passed much of my life in opposition and know how the most solid mirages will evaporate. They counted on 25 of our men, headed by Mr. Pell and Co., voting for them—and I, not being in high feather and the chief of my staff being poisoned, they were more than sanguine and brought unhappy men from Scotland and parts beyond seas. You see how it ended—I don't suppose they will try it again this year. On Monday the great battle of privilege is to take place, and I should not be surprised if it were to turn out

that in this as in other things I shall, after all the nonsense they have written, have exactly my way.

I do not go to the Derby to-morrow; I have even a Cabinet. Had I known the day you were arriving in town, which I anxiously awaited, I should have fixed the Cabinet an hour later. It is at 3 o'clock. I propose, therefore, to call on you to-morrow early, I suppose I must not say earlier than 1 o'clock; but I shall await your commands.

Sir W. Jenner has just left me. He has called three days running and has done me a great deal of harm; but as he seems now to have found out his mistake, he will probably in the course of two or three days do me as much good. I think it best not to attempt to call on you to-day because I know what it is when you receive the homage of the united families, and therefore I shall rest. I was to have moved the adjournment of the House for the Derby and Sir W. Lawson was to have resisted it in a "highly humorous" speech, and there was great expectation that I was to cap his jokes. I shall not be there and I shall leave his jokes to Mr. Smith of ye Treasury.

They sent me from Paris some magnificent asparagus, for my banquet of 40 on the 29th. I sent it to you and the darling Ida. I thought it might do for your banquet—mine was already furnished though I doubt with anything so super-eminent.

Shall I ever see you again? To see you is the greatest happiness of my life. And therefore one can hardly believe one is in reach of such felicity.

D.

He was much diverted by a dinner party at Clarence House.

"It seemed to me it was a society of Royalties playing at common folks. Not an equerry or lady-in-waiting; the only layman besides myself, poor old Quin." [2] And he added a few details in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

I wish I had spirit enough to give you a description of my "Royal Dinner" on Sunday. I call it "Royal Dinner," for so it was playfully printed on the Menu. I was described as "the new member of the family." We did not disperse till midnight and it was well kept up; the dinner very lively; the examination of the new house in all its parts interesting. We were permitted to enter even the bedchamber of the Duchess of Edinburgh and saw the Oratory with its jewelled saints and perpetual lamp. Then the Princess of Wales and the Princess Louis of Hesse—our Princess Alice—played duets together, and were not much more attended to than in commoner circles.

Work in the House of Commons, however, left little time for social engagements:

To Lady Bradford

House of Commons,
6 o'clock, May 27th, 1875

Gladstone has come down like the dragon of Wantley

[2] A popular figure in London society who found a warm welcome in aristocratic, literary, and artistic circles. He began life as a homœopathic physician—the first in England; and at an early age became a member of the household of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg (afterwards King of the Belgians) at Marlborough House and at Claremont in Surrey. Modelling himself on Count D'Orsay in dress and manners, he came to be regarded as almost the last of the wits of London society.

breathing fire and fury on some of our financial Bills, and I daresay it may go on for two or even three hours. How vexatious! Nay, how cruel! For I really have not seen you for a real quarter of an hour since your return and long absence, longer no doubt to me for always thinking of it.

Send me a line if you can to tell me you are alive and, I hope, well. I fear I may not call on you to-morrow. I could from one, and be back at the Treasury at two—when I have a deputation. Might he?

We have gained the Tipperary seat which will make up for Breconshire—so far as numbers go—but there are enough of them.

Yours ever,

D

From a political point of view, indeed, Wales offered Disraeli little encouragement:

I am told all the Welsh constituencies are as bad as possible [he wrote in his letter of May 27th to Lady Chesterfield]. It is not reaction; but the General Election was so sudden they had not time to arrange their treason. They are all Dissenters and care only for the Burial Bill and pulling down the Church.

May 31st was a particularly strenuous day. Yet Disraeli managed to find time to write one letter to Lady Chesterfield and two to Lady Bradford describing events as they took place:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
May 31st, 1875

My dearest friend,

This is one of the busiest days of my life and you must pardon a short line, though you deserve a long letter.

At noon I have a meeting of the party to address and counsel, I must be at the Levee before two, and at half past 4 I have my battle with Harty-Tarty who, I hope, will receive a smashing defeat—which will be the best answer to all the nonsense they have talked about "Privilege" for the last month.

Your dear flowers came and I thank you, my sweet friend. I could not wear the decoration on Saturday, for I was in uniform; but I wore it yesterday when I dined at the Wiltons' and met the darling Selina. I always wear the armor you allude to, in my ball dress at Court.

I met Lady A. yesterday at dinner.

I must stop with my love.

D

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
7 o'clock, May 31st, 1875

It seems so long since I have seen you that I cannot refrain from writing this note—about nothing. But "Trifles are not trifles when they please."

I have been at the House since two o'clock and I am to be there again at 9 o'clock to discuss Harty-Tarty's privilege resolutions. The Irish fight on, but I tell them I am a dog

with a bone in his mouth—and I have intimated the result of all this will only be, as far as they are concerned, a short holiday and a long Session. The Opposition (not Harty-Tarty—but then he is always at Newmarket, or somewhere) have a plan to waste time, prevent us passing our measures; and then, in the recess, hold us up to public scorn as incapables who have carried nothing. But they count without their host, for I will sit till September rather than fail.

My hand is so cramped you will hardly make out this note, from

Your devoted

D

House of Commons
May 31st, 1875

It's going on. I am only out for 5 minutes for food; but I write to you. The day which I thought would be gloomy, is a day of triumph. Meeting of the morning: you know I am not easily satisfied about myself; I was satisfied. Though we had to change the hour from 2 to noon, there were 244 members—telegrams told us that if at 2 as originally proposed, there would have been 333. Peel never did this. And now for the great scene; dear H.T. The great question which I had so mismanaged (I really believe, except yourself, everybody had given me up) 107 majority against him! Then he threw up the reins to me and begged me to do the best I could. I am trying. The thought of you sustained me throughout this great trial.

I hope to see you at one to-morrow, from

D

In a letter to Lady Chesterfield the next day, Disraeli, after repeating his account of his success in the House of Commons, added that Sir W. Jenner had told him that he had orders to report to the Queen after each visit to her Prime Minister—"He says he has to write to the Queen every day he sees me; but that her great anxiety about my health is occasioned, he thinks, not so much from love of me as dread of somebody else."

If Disraeli's estimate of the position of the rival parties was correct, there was little immediate cause for the Queen's "dread of somebody else." The fiasco of the Privilege campaign was quickly followed by other moves on the part of the Opposition which Disraeli characterised in a letter to Lady Bradford as grave tactical blunders:

I know not who really guides the Liberal party; but I think their movement yesterday was more disastrous, though not so interesting, as their Privilege campaign. A recurrence to their old tactics of sympathising with Irish agitators seems, in the present state of parties and temper of the nation, sheer folly. I have not seen the lists, but am told that Arthur Russell and some of the most respectable men voted against them. But a majority of 150 following the Address of Hartington!

The next day—June 4th—Disraeli wrote: "We have carried to-day one of our heaviest Bills through Committee, and therefore as good as passed." The work of the Session was, indeed, in full swing when Ascot races took many people, and among them not a few of Disraeli's supporters,

away from London. "Mrs. Curzon has gone off to Ascot on the top of Londesboro's drag. That's pluck," he observed to Lady Chesterfield. Nevertheless the week passed without mishap, as his daily letters to Lady Bradford show:

House of Commons,
June 8th, 1875

I went down straight to this place which I reached about half past 4. There had been a raging debate on Finance, got up by Gladstone and his coterie (Harty-Tarty being at Ascot) all bullying the Chancellor of Exchequer. I got up and helped him and they did not like, after four hours' rabid jaw, to divide. Two hours after, Gladstone having worked himself up to a state of white rage and thinking his numbers had increased, we had a division on "his speech and his censure on our financial folly." Was defeated by a majority of 67!! Pretty well, as Dyke said, for an Ascot week. In fact, our old majority—and quite making up for the comparative check of last night—a greater occasion altogether. We rattled our Bill through. I shall dine at home and get a night to work up the Agriculture Bill which I shall have to introduce in a few days, I ween.

Everything is prosperous. Bismarck raging at having been done by England and Russia. So says Odo Russell in a most wonderful letter which I have just received. Bismarck told the Emperor of Germany that Lyons was a Jesuit, and the Emperor believes him. His authority over the Emperor and the Crown Prince also, is absolute. They believe in him as in a divinity—the only divinity that the Prussians do believe in. I was very broken when we separated—and feel most lonely. It is much too late to call on

"Susan," and indeed, I am too exhausted. And now that the Duchess is gone there is no one to give me even—not a cup of cold water—but of tea.

It occurred to me as I was leaving (*talent d'escalier*) in reference to some too boastful remarks I remembered, that no one can be said to be managed, who is adored.

Ever thine,

D

10 Downing Street,
June 9th, 1875

Hardish day—Cabinet at 12, then to House of Commons where a Radical Motion on Education; awkward in Ascot week; many away. Monty came at noon—just before Cabinet and departed by the 5.40 to Englefield (I think) where he is staying with Henry Somerset. Barrington is there also.

At four o'clock finding the debate was safe for an hour and a half called on "Susan," found her at home in a dim and gorgeous chamber and covered, apparently, with talismans and mystic jewels. Very friendly, but you were right (as usual) for she soon said, "I suppose the Bradfords are at Ascot." Then she asked me to dine on Sunday (to meet Neilson!), but I was engaged to Schouvaloff, but we agreed that Sunday was a day when there should always be a social meeting, and she is going to ask me again for a Sunday and, I hope, some others.

Got to the House by five—found Dyke frightened out of his wits about the division. Last year we had 150 majority; fifteen men, at least, at Ascot and several officials. I said they should all be turned out. While the bell was

ringing for the division—but preceded by a telegram from Taylor—there came in a special train and we landed Somerset and a crew in white coats, just in time. We had more than 90 majority—and on the whole may be satisfied. I was.

I had kept my brougham and then went to dear Ida—too late for tea; but I thought we might blend our tears over the absent. Alas! she was not at home. No wonder, for it is a day of glittering beauty and Favonian softness. And so I came here, to get the Government post to write to you.—And reaction now commences and I feel my spirit dark and desolate, but

Ever yours,

D

Carlton Club,
June 10th, 1875

I fear a baddish day for the great festival [4]; cold here and windy. I fancy 300 Rosslyns in velvet and miniver and cloth of gold and chain armor of silver!

My morning spent in my Cabinet, undisturbed even by a Secretary, only by a Bishop whom I would not see—and I working hard till I was obliged to go to the House. Then after answering questions and putting things in order which were all out of order, I called again on the dear Ida, and found her at home; and she gave me tea, and made much of me and decorated me with a fragrant carnation—and then I called on Lady Derby as you ordered. She was affectionate and told me she has never slept in town since she was a girl, and can't. The noise settles on her nerves, "the hum of

[4] Cup day at Ascot.

great cities" and the rattle of carriages—because, as Lady Salisbury she was always at Hatfield, with a chance night in the Green Park—so she really lives at their new place near Tunbridge Wells, and Derby and herself are sometimes separated. I hope this does not mean they are not going to give a banquet to the Sultan of Zanzibar, for certainly I won't do it.

I have just rushed in here to scribble this and save the post. I send it to Downing Street with the brougham and then shall walk to the House, calling on my way on the Foresters. I hope you are well and happy. I am told Duchess of Marlboro' is in constant tears because Rosamund [5] is ill at Brighton, and that Cliveden [6] has got all the nice young men. I trust they are at Lady Mabel's feet.

Lady Derby wishes to give me her portrait for Hughenden, so I shall have everybody's except yours. The Master of the Horse should be generous.

Yours,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 11th, 1875

I have had a sleepless night and am quite shattered. How I am to get to the House of Commons and do the business, I know not—and yet in an hour I must be there.

I write, because I have written to you every day and sometimes think I may never see you again—a thought which often haunts me.

Grantley Berkeley, after much correspondence, had his

[5] Lady Rosamund Fellows, daughter of the Duchess of Marlborough.
[6] Then the property of the recently created Duke of Westminster.

interview this morning. My life has been a strange one and I have seen many strange people and know of many strange things; but anything so bizarre as the scene of this morning, I never encountered, quite in keeping with his race and all their wild feats and fancies, from that old ruffian Fitzhardinge[7] down to his delicate sister "Caroline," from whose chaste retreat he came this morning.

"Susan" has asked me to dine at Wharncliffe House on Sunday 27. Lady Derby has sent me her portrait.

A letter from the Faery this morning of more than six pages on "Indian politics"—very clever. This business gives me much trouble. If there be a Burmese war, he[8] can hardly go; for Indian wars depend on the concentrated attention and energy of the Viceroy who will be riding about with him, holding Durbars and shooting tigers.

I hope you are well and happy. I am neither, but

Ever yours,

D

With his oriental temperament Disraeli realised the importance of showing adequate consideration to State guests from eastern lands, and he soundly rated his colleagues for their remissness in this respect:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 13th, 1875

. . . I had a Cabinet at 12, and I gave them a good "wigging"—I believe that is the word—for the treatment of the

[7] Thomas Morton Fitz-Hardinge, 6th Earl of Berkeley *de jure*, who died in 1882, unmarried, without having assumed the title or taken his seat in the House of Lords.

[8] The Prince of Wales.

Sultan of Zanzibar at Ascot. They sate still and silent, like schoolboys; but my observations told, for in the course of the afternoon I received the enclosed letter from one of the most powerful of our Daimios. You know what those animals are in Japan?

About four o'clock, by appointment, I paid my visit to the Sultan myself. He received me at the door, or rather in the hall, of his hotel with all his chiefs. They were not good-looking, but he, himself, is an Arab with a well-favored mien, good manners, and pleasing countenance and the peculiar repose of an Oriental gentleman. Being used, from my travels, to these interviews and gentry, I addressed him directly, looking in his face as I spoke and never turning to the Interpreter. This greatly pleases them, but it is very difficult to do. The audience was successful. I took Monty (just arrived) with me and Mr. Bourke, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

. . . I heard from the Faery this morning, at great length and most interesting, on foreign affairs. She deplores returning to England, which she will do now on the 19th. It was to have been 17th. She has cribbed two days.

The article is certainly Gladstone. I have not seen it, but I never read anything he writes. His style is so involved, so wanting both in melody and harmony, that it always gives me a headache.

Yours ever,

D

His letters to Lady Chesterfield during the week contained only one item of news which had not found a place in his letters to Lady Bradford:

Meyer de Rothschild who died a few months ago, left Mentmore to his wife, worth £600,000, for her life and then to go to his daughter; and he divided his personal property, three millions sterling, between his wife and his daughter—the latter to inherit her mother's moiety on her death. That unexpectedly is at hand—they say the poor Baroness cannot live but a very short time, bad dropsy rapidly developing itself—so Miss de R. will have Mentmore and three millions sterling besides *absolutely;* not a Trust created.

CHAPTER XV

June–August 1875

SOCIAL LEGISLATION

Disraeli's dinner with the Russian Ambassador on Sunday, June 13th, was a success—"an agreeable party," as he described it to Lady Chesterfield, "no statesmen, but pretty women." And business in the House of Commons continued to make good progress. "All goes well. We carried the second reading of the Judicature Bill yesterday without a division." But his own health was again giving him trouble—"I trust you will give me a good account of yourself and that your cough is better. I don't get on at all. I don't mean to go to the Court Ball to-morrow, being obliged to husband myself. I want at least to wind up the Session with glory." Nor were all his social engagements as pleasing as his dinner with Count Schouvaloff:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
June 19th, 1875

The dinner party yesterday was detestable—dull, heavy and incongruous; people without any social sympathy. There was a good sprinkling of unknown nobility, and people whom I particularly wished not to meet and whom

I had quite counted on not meeting the whole season—that dreadful Lady S——, for example, who wants me to make her a Marchioness. I was fortunate in having Lady Skelmersdale for my partner, and there was also Lady A., but these were the only persons who are in real society, and the genius of the place and the occasion seemed to paralyse them. . . .

Yours,

D

Disraeli travelled to Windsor on Sunday, June 20th, and found the Queen as usual gracious and pleased to see him. "She said she had been very anxious about my health," he told Lady Chesterfield; "but was less so now, as she was convinced it was gout . . . " The visit was repeated the following week:

To Lady Bradford

House of Commons,
June 28th, 1875

I went down with the new French Ambassador, M. d'Harcourt, a thorough gentleman, most polished and easy in his manners and natural. He is quite an Englishman, the son of an Emigré and born here, I believe. I told the Queen the French Ambassador is doomed to be an Englishman; for this gentleman is quite as much so as Jarnac—poor dear Jarnac who also loved you and whom I loved. The Marquis d'Harcourt was quite at home at Windsor, for he had been bred at St. Leonards close by. Now he comes

LADY FORESTER, MOTHER OF ANNE AND SELINA

From a miniature

from Vienna, in consequence of the death of Jarnac, his great friend, and whom, consulted by Duc de Cazes, he recommended for the Embassy.

The Faery was very gracious; she would make me sit down even in the presence chamber. She says I am never to stand. I had been walking in the corridor for an hour. When I took my leave at the audience, I would put my golden chair back in its place that the breach of etiquette should be kept a secret. So I told her, and she smiled. Then I had to come in again with the counsellors. The Canadian Premier was also brought down. He had never seen Windsor before—and also Mr. Lumley, to whom I am always very kind, because we have a mutual friend. I am always watching to give him a turn.

I hope you are well. I tired you yesterday. It was too bad on my part; but I think of the long days and weeks and months when I shall not have the opportunity of wearying you, and that makes me reckless. This is the cause of that dark despondence which sometimes overwhelms me. I was distressed because you did not say goodnight to me at Lord Wharncliffe's. It gave me some sleepless hours. You should not laugh at me for this, or deride me, which I know you do—but rather pity one who, having so great affairs to manage, is unhappily so sensitive about his own.

Your very devoted

D

The intervening week had not been without its trials, and Disraeli's constant presence was required to keep matters straight in the House of Commons:

To Lady Chesterfield

June 25th, 1875

. . . Yesterday was a hard day. I had to put the Government right about their demand for the Tuesdays, made uncouthly in my absence. But I soon restored the House to its good humor. Then I had to bring forward our Agricultural Bill and we had a debate till nearly two o'clock in the morning. But the great Opposition all ended in smoke —and you will be glad to hear that between one and two o'clock in the morning, although I had not left my seat from four o'clock except ten minutes for some rapid sustenance, I made a reply quite "in my old form" the members said, and covered the enemy with confusion.

I dine to-morrow at Marlboro' House and since I was asked the Prince intends to have a Comedie in the evening, and Selina is invited. This is good. And she has an evening reception to-day after her dinner, and I mean to escape from Lady Derby's and pay her a visit.

I hope your dear eye is better. I think its brilliancy must have attracted the little midge who meant no mischief but wished to expire in the blaze. I remember well when I saw those eyes first and they have lost little of their lustre.

Adieu! dear darling, and always love

Your affectionate

D

The fact that Disraeli was at last in a position to give effect to the political ambitions of a lifetime threw a halo over these days of Parliamentary exertion. And as he worked at the programme of social betterment which he

had so consistently expounded, he experienced that feeling of satisfaction which is the reward of all genuinely creative work. His feelings were reflected in his letters:

To Lady Bradford

June 29th, 1875

You wondered whether I should read the letter before I went home. As I never conceal my weaknesses from you—which I know is a great mistake—I will confess to you that I not only read the letter before I went home, but I read it more than once. . . . It lightened my heart and put me in humor for the great good fortune and triumph which attended us in our Labor Laws last night. I cannot express to you the importance of last night. It is one of those measures that root and consolidate a party. We have settled the long and vexatious contest between Capital and Labor. It will have the same effect on the great industrial population "on the other side Trent," which the Short Time Bill had in the West Riding and Lancashire. I must tell you what I will tell to no other being—not even the Faery, to whom I am now going to write a report of the memorable night—that when Secretary Cross explained his plan to the Cabinet, many were against it and none for it except myself; and it was only in deference to the Prime Minister that a decision was postponed to another day. In the interval the thing was better understood and managed. I have so much to write this morning that I must leave the rest for conversation. . . .

He wrote in similar terms to Lady Chesterfield:

I got to the House of Commons and in good time to witness one of the greatest triumphs that any Government has had in my time—the passing of the Labor Laws amid the enthusiasm of all parties in the House of Commons. The representatives of the artisans, Macdonald, and of the employers—the great employers like Mr. Tennant of Leeds and others—all sang the same song; and it is not a transient carol. This is the greatest measure since the Short Time Act and will gain and retain for the Tories the lasting affection of the working classes.

Disraeli's admonitions of his colleagues on the score of their lack of appreciation of the importance of according an adequate welcome to their visitor from Zanzibar, bore fruit; and in a letter to Lady Bradford on June 30th, he described a banquet given in the Sultan's honour by Lord Salisbury:

I thought the general scheme of the banquet not favorable to unaffected gaiety, as it mainly consisted of the political leaders of both sides. Gladstone sate opposite me; Lord and Lady Selborne exchanged compliments with the Lord Chancellor and Lady Cairns; and Lord and Lady Granville were asked to meet Lord and Lady Derby but did not come. The Sultan, according to the interpreters, was in rapturous admiration of the greatness of the country which permitted such a social combination of adverse political elements. I daresay, however, if one could have read the thoughts of many, particularly of my opposite neighbor, there were some wishes that my cognac and water had taken the form of *Aqua Toxana.*

On July 3rd he wrote to Lady Bradford in an irritable mood:

I have got a Cabinet at three and a very troublesome one. The Prince of Wales' Indian affairs are all at sea again. It requires great temper to endure what I have to go through at this moment; and as I now never see you I have no one to complain to and, in complaining, consult.

"A tremendous box from the Faery," he wrote on July 5th, "enclosing awful documents and demanding my counsel and reply. I have just done it." And on the 6th—"House of Commons prevented my going to Chiswick; but the Prince sent an important message by Monty and the Faery telegraphed me a volume on her return to Windsor." On the 7th he spoke once more of indisposition:

I came home on Monday night very late, and very unwell, my enemy having apparently clutched my chest again. But Leggatt, who came in the morning, gave me some relief and he will be here again in a few minutes. I hate to write about my ailments, but it is best to do so.

In the House of Commons provision had to be made for the Prince of Wales's approaching visit to India, and though Mr. Biggar—"delicately said he liked the Prince to give presents, but not with his (Mr. Biggar's) money"—Disraeli flattered himself that he had managed the matter with ability and tact:

The Prince of Wales' vote went off very well. It was favorably received and I flatter myself owing to the way in which it was introduced, which was adroit. As I am never satisfied—or at least rarely—I may be permitted to praise myself for once.

Disraeli's jubilation over his adroitness was, it seemed, a little premature; satisfaction at the way the matter had been dealt with was not nearly so widespread as he had imagined. There were some who thought that the Prince was getting too much; there were others who held that he was not getting enough. The Prince himself was among these latter. "To-morrow I go to Windsor," the Prime Minister wrote on July 10th, "but I return to dine with Schouvaloff when I shall meet the Prince of Wales who, I am told, is discontented with the Indian vote and will cut me—and would probably cut my head off were it not for the British Constitution." And he recurred to the matter in a letter to Lady Bradford on July 19th:

I dread my Stafford House dinner to-morrow. There was a Greenwich dinner on Friday or Saturday—the Prince there. The Duke of Sutherland arrived and said, "What a shabby concern this vote is! If I were you, Sir, I would not take it. I would borrow the money of some friends at 5 per cent." "Well, will you lend it me?" said the Prince, which shut the Duke up. If H.R.H. knew I had so successfully proved he was a wit, perhaps he would pardon me.

The remaining days of the Session which lasted into the second week of August, were full of excitement, a

leading cause being the violence of Mr. Plimsoll and his supporters, who were incensed by the announcement made by the Prime Minister of his intention to drop the Merchant Shipping Bill, and who gave a theatrical display of indignation on the floor of the House. A graphic, if possibly a somewhat highly coloured, picture of these last days of struggle and eventual success is given in Disraeli's letters to the two sisters:

To Lady Chesterfield

July 20th, 1875

I am in the midst of a tremendous contest which I have long foreseen, but for which I am quite prepared. I have to encounter a factious Opposition mad with jealousy at the great measures which the Government have passed and showing their teeth—but too late. The measures are passed, or as good as passed, and they can't prevent their passage . . . Our division was excellent last night.

The next day he wrote again to Lady Chesterfield:

These are troublous times and I have more on my shoulders than I can well bear—but I must find a corner for you. We had a hard morning till 7 o'clock in the House yesterday and my own troops were very troublesome about the Agricultural Bill which they had all previously approved at a meeting of the party. But I see my way though the toil is great and the anxiety not a little.

Two days later he found time to scribble a hurried line to Lady Bradford:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 23rd, 1875

I cannot express to you how happy I was to receive your note at the H. of C. One can get through anything with such celestial messengers!

We made great progress last night in the Agricultural Bill. I shall call at Belgrave Square this morning about half past one—in the hope I may see you, if only for an instant.

Yours ever,

D

Saturday brought a brief respite:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 24th, 1875

A pause in a time of great labor and some anxiety! Nothing else would have prevented my writing to you for two days. I have, really, not a moment even for you—for when not in absolute action one is in constant and absorbing thought. I have, however, succeeded in all my purposes at present and have no fear for the future, though it will be a fortnight or three weeks of terrible work.

I have seen dear Selina very little and soon shall see her not at all. Country House life does not suit me, for though I love solitude and passionately nature, being quite of the King of the Belgians' opinion that trees are preferable even to pictures, I have no sympathy with the tastes or pursuits of the dwellers in the houses one visits. They don't much like me and I don't particularly affect them.

I went to the Ball last night at Marlboro' House, but only

to pay my Court to the genial Host and Hostess, and after talking to a few, and receiving a terrible remonstrance from the Duchess of Wellington for not having attended a single one of her parties this year, I escaped and was home before one.

. . . I saw Selina at the Ball, but only touched her hand: I don't think she likes me to hang about her much in public—and as she is so kind as to let me call on her when I can, I ought not to complain. But all that is fast vanishing. I wish my temper had changed with my years, but to be romantic even yet, is a mistake and I feel it keenly. I detest society really, for I never entered it without my feelings being hurt. I cannot say I am happy in solitude, but one is tranquil and may be profound.

The Duke of Marlboro', who was with me yesterday morning, admired my roses and asked if they came from Hughenden? I said they were the gift of a fairy; "a good fairy"—and then I led him to a sofa where is your picture. That is going with me to Hughenden.

My darling, I send you many loves.

D

A pleasant dinner party on the Saturday night was followed, however, by an unfortunate mishap:

July 25th, 1875

Yesterday I dined at Holland House; a banquet, four and twenty at least . . . It was a most delightful dinner and a most charming evening. We had Mr. Corney Grain to amuse us with his songs and mimickry and some were quaint and good. . . . I had a dreadful accident to my

brougham in the evening and I fear I shall lose my beautiful horse, the Baron, for whom I gave 300 guineas four years ago and who has never been ill a single hour.

The respite did not extend beyond Sunday, and on Monday the 26th he wrote from the House of Commons—"The storm is high, but I think I shall direct it. A terrible day; I have not a moment for myself, or for you, and I absolutely try to write this seated in my place." An account of the proceedings followed the next day:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 27th, 1875

I was up till 3 o'clock and have a terrible day (days!) before me; but I have risen early that, if possible, I might write to you. The Cabinet was an anxious one. A certain person, violent, treating the whole agitation with contempt —would not sacrifice our "dignity" as a Government, which he saw would be the result. Strange to say, he was supported by one of a totally different temperament, who had proved by inexpugnable logic on a previous occasion that the course then adopted was "the only one," and he stuck to it. At one moment, I thought nothing could be effected—but at last, and *with unanimity,* there was a dicision. That has had immediate effect at least in the House of Commons. There was a "meeting" in the morning of yesterday, as last year, of an expectant Cabinet. Gladstone was brought up and Carlingford, who had been President of the Board of Trade and then a great opponent of Plimsoll, was consulted. There was to have been a fierce attack on the Government

on the order of the day, but Sir C. Adderley's announcement stopped all this, and we went quietly in to Committee on the Agricultural Bill, and made immense progress, so that I really expect to conclude the Committee to-day, for I have got the whole morning, from 2 to 7 and then from 9 till the usual late hour.

I entreat you not to breathe a word of what I have written above, to any human being. I don't mean Bradford, of course, from whom I have no secrets and who is a Privy Councillor, and whom I would trust were he not a P.C.

The Cabinet meets in an hour. We have to settle our measure; and what is of not less importance, my answer this morning at 2 o'clock to Dillwyn, as to whether we will give a day immediately to Plimsoll's Bill. I think as much depends on my reply as on our measure. . . .

A certain person, the great logician, made among many other sharp remarks, a good one yesterday. He said he had not only not changed his opinion but believed that the withdrawal of the Merchant Shipping Bill would have passed without notice by the country, had it not been for two unexpected incidents which we could not have counted on—the Plimsoll scene and the verdict against a wicked shipowner in the Irish Courts. The first showed, he said, what a dangerous man Plimsoll was to trust to in legislation —and the second proved that the existing law was an efficient one; and yet these two incidents, fanned, of course, by faction, have agitated the country.

You must excuse these incoherent jottings and this feeble handwriting—but I can scarcely guide my pen from want of sleep. Otherwise very well—no cough, no bronchitis, and though without slumber, not overexcited.

The matter which had caused all the trouble referred to in the above letter, was the decision of the Government recently announced to withdraw the Merchant Shipping Bill. The agitation to which the decision had given rise was embarrassing, and it was Disraeli's wish to do something to disarm legitimate criticism. To this course the Cabinet eventually agreed; and on July 26th, Sir C. Adderley gave notice that on the 28th he would move for leave to introduce a Bill to arm the Board of Trade with further powers for preventing unseaworthy ships from proceeding to sea. It was to this announcement that Disraeli referred in his letter to Lady Bradford. The Bill was duly introduced and was passed a few days later. Nevertheless the intervening days were critical ones for the Government. The Opposition were determined to press home in the House of Commons the tactical advantage which they had gained when the Government had withdrawn the Merchant Shipping Bill; and demonstrations were hastily organized in the country. Rumours of all kinds were in circulation as to the intentions of Mr. Plimsoll when the day arrived on which he had been summoned to appear in the House. Disraeli had little fear of the outcome of the clash between his generalship and the strategy of the Opposition. His success in persuading the Cabinet to agree to the introduction of a new Shipping Bill, referred to in his letter of July 27th to Lady Bradford, provided him with an adequate answer to the Plimsoll agitation so far as it appealed, on the merits of the question, to the public. His chief anxiety was with regard to the attendance

at the fag end of the Session of his own supporters. His letters of the next few days kept Lady Bradford informed on all these matters. On July 29th he wrote her two long accounts of the position and, in spite of his preoccupation, included in one of them—extraordinary man—a disquisition on horse breeding!

2 Whitehall Gardens,
6 o'clock, July 29th, 1875

I send a rapid line after a morning of great excitement, of endless and terrific rumors of all possible events and combinations; Plimsoll to-morrow not to appear; Plimsoll to-morrow to appear and defy the House; to get into the custody of the Sergeant at Arms at all events, but to come down first with brass bands, open carriage with four white horses and twenty thousand retainers![1]

Then, our Bill to-day was not to be permitted to be brought in, and other mischances and difficulties and humiliations—however, our Bill *has been* brought in, and I have fixed its second reading for Friday morning and remain, ostensibly at least, perfectly calm amid a sea and storm of panic and confusion. My position is difficult in one respect; for the Queen, devoted to me, can't help me. For, if I were defeated in the House, I could not dissolve; for in the present fever I probably should get worsted. I can't prorogue for I have not got my money, the Estimates not yet being concluded. All I have got to look to are my friends. If they stand by me I shall overcome every-

[1] On July 22nd Disraeli had moved that Mr. Plimsoll be requested to attend in his place on that day week to apologise for his unruly conduct in connection with the statement by the Government of their intention to withdraw the Merchant Shipping Bill.

thing and greatly triumph; but does friendship exist in August? Does it not fly to Scotland and Norway and the Antipodes, or Goodwood? I have seen some wonderful long faces that used to smile on me. I neither love them more nor less. The only beings in the world I care for are away, and Heaven knows even if they spare a thought to me and my agitated fortunes!

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
10 o'clock, July 29th, 1875

I got your letter an hour ago; a great consolation to me in my fierce life. I am very well; no cough, no bronchial weakness; but I suffer from the Bismarckian complaint—want of sleep, not from anxiety, for my slumber is not disturbed. It is deep enough, but I can't get sufficient; I cannot average five hours, and that is not adequate. However, the excitement carries one on. Now, I know exactly how a General must feel in a great battle—like Waterloo for example, with aides-de-camp flying up every moment with contrary news, and spies, and secret agents, and secret intelligence, and all sorts of proposals and schemes.

The Plimsollites, in and out of Parliament, are at me; now cajoling, now the reign of terror. Their great object is to get Plimsoll into the custody of the Sergeant at Arms —and on my Motion. That, they consider from what they have been told, is inevitable if he does not appear to-day—and they are right according to precedent. But I am the person to make the Motion and I will make a precedent too. After the declaration of his authorised friend in the House, that "he was off his head," &c., I shall hold him as

a man not responsible for his conduct and move the adjournment of his case for a month. This will sell them if they try the scheme of his absence—i.e. disobedience to the commands of the House. I should not be surprised if, after all his bluster, he goes in and makes an unconditional apology. Every intriguer is trying to make some fortune by the crisis. Plimsoll has a wonderful number of enthusiastic friends very suddenly. I only wish they had supported our Bill when it was before them, instead of throwing every obstacle in its way. Horsman is very busy; asked Monty to luncheon yesterday; told him it was all over with the Government though he once thought he could save them; advised, as a last resource, that I should deliver a panegyric to-day in favor of Plimsoll and accept his Bill, *pur et simple*.

My own judgment of the House of Commons is that a considerable—and the most reputable—section of the Opposition is against Plimsoll; I believe, which is the truth, that his Bill would injure, not to say destroy, our mercantile marine and that if my friends are firm to me, I shall entirely triumph. As far as I can hear, I have no reason to doubt their devotion. Many of our most considerable men have told me that they are prepared, if necessary, to alter all their plans and remain by my side.

I should hope Monty would be able to send you a line; but he has much to do, dear fellow! He is very anxious, but full of resource and energy. Tell Bradford I do not write to him, as I could have wished, but I really have not time. Besides, my letters to you are always equally to him. You must look upon my letters as family letters, as I have often told you. I am sure I love my country; but there

is only one family in it that I really care for. I owe to it all the domestic comfort and happiness I have, and out of the sphere of public affairs I scarcely have a thought except for them. It is a comfort to me, in all this, to see Newport and speak to him in the lobby. . . .

Tell Bradford I was greatly disappointed that his horse came in second. I cannot understand why a great noble with his brains and knowledge of horses, does not command the turf. I don't want him to have a great stable; but I want him to have a famous one; that he should at any cost obtain some first-rate blood, and then carefully and sedulously breed from it—as Rothschild did with King Tom. I saw the beginning of his plan at Mentmore, and people turned up their noses at his scheme and his sire for a while, and yet eventually that blood gave him the Derby, the Oaks, and the St. Leger in one year. I should like to see that done at dear Weston.

For aught I know, while I write of these pleasant things the mob may be assembling which is to massacre me. I have had several letters threatening assassination. I shall take no precautions, but walk down with Monty and meet my fate whatever comes. I feel sure, at least almost, that there will be one family in England who will cherish my memory with kindness and indulgence.

Affectionately yours,

D

2 Whitehall Gardens,
July 30th, 1875

Everything went off quietly yesterday out of doors, and triumphantly inside. Mr. Secretary Cross, who is naturally

a brave man, got so frightened about his chief that I believe there were 1,000 constables hid in the bowers of Whitehall Gardens and about. But I had no fears, and principally from this, that Monty, who has been everywhere and doing everything, ascertained that Bradlaugh and Co. had completely failed in getting up a Clerkenwell mob, as the people said they would not go against me who had passed the Labor Laws for them.

All the meetings in the provinces were held by telegraphic orders from the Reform Club, but before they could hold their meetings, at least generally speaking, the announcement of the Government measure had taken the wind out of their sails. Plimsoll also got restive and did not like the brass bands and flags, &c., and said he would not be made a party tool and that he had received more support from the Tories than the Whigs; the consequence of all this was much fiasco.

The papers will tell you what took place in the House. The campaign opened unfortunately for the foe. They tried to stop public business and failed ignominiously. Adams, the Whig Whip, who is a gentleman, told Dyke that "the Plimsoll business was a flash in the pan." They did not think so 8 and 40 hours ago. Then after the failure I got into Committee on my Bill, and absolutely at 1 o'clock concluded it amid loud cheers. I never had more continuous and greater majorities than throughout this Bill.[2]

I am very glad Harry C.[3] was not at Goodwood. He has never left my side, and his aid has been invaluable. He is a natural orator and a debater too. He is the best speaker

[2] The Agricultural Holdings Bill.
[3] Harry Chaplin.

in the House of Commons or will be. Mark my words.

I have a Cabinet at noon; the House of Commons at two, when we have the second reading of our Ship Bill. I should not be surprised if it passed without a division. The battle of Armageddon, however, will be on Monday when in Committee they will try to substitute Plimsolliana for our proposals. I am sending all over the world for votes. Chaplin has a house full for Brighton races, but remains here. *O! si sic omnia* or rather *omnes!*

Yours ever,

D

In spite of the successful outcome of the week, Disraeli was still anxious, and on Sunday, August 1st, he wrote urgently to Lord Bradford—"I am not an alarmist; but affairs are rather critical here. Pray do all you can to send fellows up for to-morrow. I have my doubts about Randolph Churchill. *Entre nous* the Duke of Marlborough is asking a great favor of me which may not be granted —but I have not said so. I don't like to speak to him; but you are a member of the Government and can. His Boro' should not be wanting." The letter did not reach its destination in time and Monday, August 2nd, was an anxious day:

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 3rd, 1875

Dear Darling,

I sent you a telegram. I wrote it at 3 o'clock in the morning and left it on my dressing table. It was to reassure you.

It was "all right," but it was not glorious. My men did not come up very well. Newport was away even! And those who came were still Plimsollised *too* much. If the Opposition had been led by a great general they might have inflicted on me much humiliation. Their main attack, which was what I feared, failed, but from their own panic. If they had known the state of our camp, which they ought to have known, they could have run me very hard and might have substituted their own policy for mine. Instead of that, they let me get into Committee where defeats are on matters of detail. Adderley made a terrific blunder; but on the whole I may be content, and carried the Bill through without ignominy.

Adieu! You meet soon your affectionate

D

It was thought desirable to make some counter-demonstration to the campaign against the Government outside the House of Commons, and Disraeli was persuaded by his friends to undertake the task—"I am now preparing to go and dine with the Lord Mayor and make a political manifesto," he told Lady Chesterfield on the 4th. "It was only settled yesterday that I should do this. I yielded to the most earnest solicitations of my party. It is a great tax on me. I had refused to dine in the city; but I am well, thank God, and I must do my duty." The manifesto provoked a reply from Lord Hartington in the House of Commons; which in its turn gave Disraeli a further opportunity of which he did not fail to avail himself:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 7th, 1875

I do not know whether you are still in the kingdom of Cockaigne? I was indeed sorry that I could not reach Belgrave Square last night. But Harty-Tarty could not rise till nearly eleven. Had he given me 10,000 pounds, he could not have done me a greater service than making his attack. I am rarely satisfied with myself, but I was last night—almost as much as my friends, who were in a state of enthusiasm. I think I left Harty-Tarty in a state of syncope. He sate quite opposite to me and I could see his face. The look of wooden amazement and the blush of proud confusion. Gladstone was by him, having been kept in town for the occasion; but the bottleholder was Lowe who made copious notes to answer me, but did not dare to rise! They all deserted him. The *Times* has not even an article "to cover his retreat." I send the *Standard*. Understand, it is no friend of mine, but the article was no doubt written by Gorst, an M.P. and a salaried editor, and it is literally true and just. . . .

D

A memorable Session was thus brought to a successful conclusion. "You will be pleased to hear that when we met yesterday," Disraeli told Lady Bradford on the 8th, "Derby said—'Our first act ought to be to thank our Chief for closing the campaign by a victory.'" And in a letter to the same correspondent on August 10th, he summed up the achievements of the last few days:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
August 10th, 1875

. . . We have done capital business both in Lords and Commons these last few days, and several most important measures which they pressed me so eagerly to give up, and which I thought then were virtually surrendered, have been carried; but above all the Trade Marks Bill, a measure of the utmost gravity and importance, a subject which Parliament has been hammering at for years and no Government could settle, has been passed triumphantly and will give profound satisfaction to the whole manufacturing and commercial world. After the approval of the Speech by the Queen this has happened, and I have been obliged this morning to insert a fresh paragraph in the great document.

The *Times* may scold, it may rave and rant; but it will not daunt me. I know it greatly influences you, and it rules Anne, and that the confidence of you both in me is greatly shaken; but you will see that I am right—and very soon see it—and that public opinion will decide in my favor. The Queen's Speech is a document of such weight and authenticity, dealing only with facts, that the nation is always influenced by this Sovereign summary. It will soon be in your hands—those hands that I may never touch. Amidst imperial triumphs the bitterness of my heart will still overtake me.

D

CHAPTER XVI

August–September 1875

TROUBLES IN THE NEAR AND THE FAR EAST

To Disraeli's surprise and delight he received an invitation to pay a visit to Weston during the latter half of August. "On Monday I go to Weston," he wrote in a letter to Lady Chesterfield on Saturday the 21st. "Aren't you surprised? I am. Bradford wrote and asked me, and I go because I shall have no other chance this year—and next year probably shall not be asked at all." He added a few details of recent events in the royal circles in which he had been moving at Osborne. "The Queen is terribly annoyed about 'the catastrophy' as Her Majesty calls it; I had two telegrams from her yesterday anent." The catastrophy was a collision between the royal yacht *Alberta* and the *Mistletoe,* and Disraeli was speedily to hear more of it. "The Queen has sent me a MS. narrative by herself of the terrible collision and all she felt and all she saw. It is vivid and worth reading. I shall bring it to Bretby with me."[1] Nor was this the last of it, for on September 11th, Disraeli again referred to it in a letter to Lady Chesterfield:

I have heard from the Faery every day. She had become

[1] Letter to Lady Chesterfield, August 22nd, 1875.

most nervous and unhappy having convinced herself that the jury was resolved to bring in a verdict of manslaughter![2] But last night there came a telegram to me from Balmoral full of joy and relief. The verdict of the inquest which three weeks ago she could not have endured, seems to her now a sort of triumph. She is most kind to a friend of yours and says shall be ever grateful to him for his sympathy which sustained her in this great trial.

There were, however, weightier matters than these to occupy the Prime Minister's attention:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
August 20th, 1875

. . . The affairs in European Turkey are anxious; I had four telegrams this morning. I do not think, however, matters are as serious as the newspapers make out. Now that Parliament is up they want a sensation subject and a little stockjobbing is always welcome. The moment I heard of the outbreak at all making head (I think it was the day before I went to Osborne—yes, the day of the last Cabinet and before the Fish Dinner) I conferred with Derby and telegraphed to our Minister at Vienna to see Andrassy instantly and ascertain, if possible, his real wishes. Nothing could be more satisfactory than his reply, and if we were dealing with anyone but the Turks the failure of the insurrection would not only be certain but immediate. If Austria is really neutral or, as she professes, anxious to as-

[2] Against the Captain of the *Alberta*.

sist Turkey, it ought not to last; but the want of energy at Constantinople is superhuman. Though ruined in their finance, we have always been told that the Turks had at least created an army and a fleet and both of a high class; but I only hear, after repeated appeals from our Ambassadors, that they have scraped together less than 2,000 men and are sending them in slow-sailing merchant transports. They could not reach the scene of war were it not for Austria. There is one peculiarly interesting telegram from our Ambassador at Constantinople who had had an audience on the 18th of the Sultan himself, who, however, was full of beans and said "if Austria be neutral, I will crush the affair at once." I might tell you a good deal more; but I fear it would not interest and my letter is getting too long.

From Hughenden Disraeli went to Weston, and from Weston to Bretby:

September 1st, 1875

I have a terrible post bag and have been forced to refuse a morning walk with our Chatelaine; and yet, though I have much to write and to several countries, I send my first lines to Weston. So far as I can judge, in a short inspection certainly, Lady Chesterfield is very well and I think looks very well and is cheerful. She seems to me the same as when I was last here, now nearly a year ago, and Lady A. is exactly the same and Mrs. Curzon is exactly the same and the General and your brother exactly the same. One would have thought that none of them had left the room since I last met them here. And yet a good deal has since happened to most of us.

Disraeli was, indeed, in a captious mood. He complained of his pens and ink, of the life at Bretby, of everything:

September 2nd, 1875

I write again—so you see you were wrong, as you generally are in your remarks on my character and conduct. . . . But what am I to write about in this land of drowsyhead! . . . A piteous letter from Lady Augusta Noel, written as if I had blasted all Gerard's hopes in life by not appointing him to office, which he declined and from his illness was obliged to decline, in any form. Yet I must answer her, and how terrible to have to do it with this inferior stationery—almost as bad as yours. It is not only my handwriting, but my ideas and expressions greatly depend upon my pens, ink and paper. I have got my own pens; but the ink is like the lake Asphaltites and the paper spongy like an Irish bog. It affects even my spelling. . . .

I enjoyed on the whole my visit to Weston. I think on reflection the pleasure was the result of an aggregate of circumstances in themselves not considerable, rather than from any predominant cause. You were kind but you might have been kinder. But "all feelings change," and I suppose that, all conditions being equal, the novelty of a new acquaintance is ever the superior spell. One tells the same stories over again and what appeared to be original is now thought to be affected. So "charm by charm unwinds," and I am not at all astonished that a certain class of minds seek refuge in inviolate solitude. I often sigh for it. Here, I take refuge from many sources of weariness in business. I am working at my arrears of correspondence and keeping things in other places in order. Fancy my

having to write to Derby to-day a letter as long as this, on one of the most difficult of subjects with this ink of Hades! I have had to tear up as much as I have ultimately sent.

Bretby,
September 4th, 1875

. . . I take no morning walks here, however winning the sunshine. I am so impressed with the utter and dreary waste of my life here, that I give my mornings up exclusively to business. I appear at breakfast, having got into that habit at Weston where it was delightful; there it gives a social commencement to the day; but after breakfast I go to my cabinet and work always till luncheon time. In these three hours and more, I can do a great deal, in fact enough; and the consciousness that the day has not been lost sustains me for the rest of the hours, prevents my being dejected and apparently sullen. After luncheon, I walk or drive, as they like, play a game of billiards with George Curzon, a nice boy, and so on. When I get back to my room between 5 and 6, it is generally to find telegrams and Despatches which require immediate attention, and if I be free of them, I read a little Renaissance. Dinner and a rubber close the day. Nothing but my great affection for your sister and the constant recollection whose sister she is, could reconcile me to a life where I never catch a thought that strikes, or a remark that I can remember. There is nothing in Lady A. After a few general observations on politics or manners, all of which I have heard from her before, she falls into the lowest order of gossip, only differing from the trash of the servants' hall in her superior pro-

nunciation. I have tried some others here, but they seemed chiefly of ye same block. I am meditating my escape.

The "Renaissance" to which he referred was Symonds's. "It is a good book," he wrote, "not a great one." He thought that no one could comprehend the force of individual character till they had mastered Italian history. And as he read, his interest was stimulated:

I have now read two thirds of the Renaissance volume with unflagging interest. I do not know that it tells me anything which I did not absolutely know before; but then early in life I was rather deep in Italian literature and the Hughenden library is rich in Renaissance. But the writer is a complete Italian scholar and has a grasp of his subject which, from the rich variety of its elements, can never be one of simplicity, and yet which from his complete hold, he keeps perspicuous. As he warms with his theme he even evinces some spark of that divine gift of Imagination, in which he appeared to me at first deficient. I have marked a passage p. 315 worthy your attention, though you must read up to it. What he fails in is style; not that he lacks vigor, but taste. He writes like a newspaper man, "our own correspondent," but wants the stillness and refinement and delicacy and music which do not fall to the lot of the daily journalist. He talks, for example, of two great statesmen, "playing a game of diplomatic écarté." Independent of the familiarity and triteness of such an image, there is something offensive in a grave historian illustrating his narrative by referring to a transient game. He might as well have illustrated his battles by croquet, or that lawn

tennis in which you excel. He is perpetually speaking of certain opinions and feelings as being very *"bourgeois"*—and so on.

In letters, the first and greatest condition of success is style. It is that by which the great authors live. It is a charm for all generations, and keeps works alive which would be superseded from the superior information obtained since they were first composed, by the magic of the language in which the original statements and conclusions are conveyed. Works of imagination, whether in prose or verse, have this advantage over other literary compositions—they cannot become obsolete from their matter being superseded; but then they cannot live unless they fulfil the great condition of style in the highest degree. This makes Shakespeare and Goethe and Byron and Dante immortal—and not less so, the authors of Don Quixote and Gil Blas. We have no English novel like them, for style was not the forte of Walter Scott. It is style which is the secret spell of the classic authors. Both Greek and Roman had a power of expression which was their characteristic.

A tedious lecture all this, for the lady of Weston, and yet she is one who has something better in her brain than even the love of roses. . . .

D

Disraeli had thought of appointing Lord George Hamilton Secretary of State for Ireland. Lady Bradford had doubted the wisdom of such a step; and the Lord Chancellor, whom the Prime Minister had also consulted, was in agreement with Lady Bradford. "The Lord Chancellor agrees with you about George Hamilton, which proves that

my confidence in your judgment is not misplaced. Father and son will not do. It would be said we were delivering up Ireland to one family. He gives all the reasons in detail and very masterly. . . ." The state of affairs on the Continent necessitated a return to London:

Bretby Park,
September 6th, 1875

. . . I leave this place on Wednesday morning. I should have done so at all events, but I am obliged. The Herzegovina affair and Danubian politics in general are in a very unsatisfactory state. Andrassy is quite undecided, or playing a double game; perhaps both. It is curious, but since the fall of France who used to give us so much alarm and so much trouble, the conduct of foreign affairs for England has become infinitely more difficult. There is no balance, and unless we go out of our way to act with three northern Powers, they can act without us, which is not agreeable for a State like England; nor do I see, as I have told you before, any prospect of the revival of France as a military puissance. She is more likely to be partitioned than to conquer Europe again. When I entered political life there were three great Powers in danger—the Grand Signor of the Ottomans, the Pope of Rome and the Lord Mayor of London. The last will survive a long time; but the fall of France has destroyed the Pope and will, ultimately, drive the Turk from Europe. . . . I have a tremendous post to-day from Balmoral—two boxes; one about the Danube with a *private* letter from Her great friend on the continent—and a terrible box about her domestic vexations and annoyances; an original letter from Prince Leiningen which must be returned. Ah! if you were here

to copy it in your handwriting—which is like yourself. I terribly miss my Secretary and my friend that I could say anything to, and often, in expressing my difficulties to her, discover their remedy.

I have just got a telegram from Derby at Fairhill. I communicated with him only an hour ago! I can't get over the feeling of magic when I receive these electric missives, though I ought to be hardened to them. We shall not be able to decide on anything till Friday. I am sorry for this, as I had a chance (and still have a chance I hope) of meeting you at Wortley.

Your devoted,

D.

From Downing Street Disraeli wrote on September 10th that he was so wearied that he could scarcely guide a pen or see. He thought, however, that things would go right—"The three Powers are acting *bona fide* because they are so jealous of each other." Thus to Lady Chesterfield. On the same day he wrote to Lady Bradford:

It is a strange thing that at this moment when so much is at stake there is not a single Ambassador in England, and throughout the whole of the Danubian troubles not one of Her Majesty's Ambassadors has been at his post. Sir A. Buchanan returned to Vienna only two days ago; the rest are at God knows what waters—probably Lethe.

On the 11th he travelled to Wortley Hall, Lord Wharncliffe's seat in Yorkshire, and from there wrote a "very private" line to Lady Chesterfield concerning his correspond-

ence with the Queen. Echoes of the unfortunate collision of the *Alberta* and its aftermath still rumbled—"My correspondence from my great friend continues unceasing—and still agitated, too agitated. The verdict was to a certain degree a relief; but the conduct of *Mr. H.*[3] is considered more terrible almost than the collision. It distresses me." From Wortley Hall he went to stay with Lord and Lady Faversham at Duncombe Park, spending a night at Sandbeck Park, the seat of the Earl of Scarbrough on the way:

To Lady Chesterfield

Duncombe Park,
September 19th, 1875

Dearest Friend,

I know your kind heart will like to have a line from me and to know how I feel.

I left Sandbeck yesterday in a most wretched state: a perfectly sleepless night, an agitated morn and my bronchial tubes beginning to show, as they had for some days, that I had been living in the palace of the winds. I was so ill and so very depressed, that I sometimes felt that I could hardly live to see the sun set.

I was so unwell, when I arrived, that Lady Faversham ordered fires immediately in both my rooms and gave me a great deal of good advice. I would have endeavored to follow it, had she and her husband been alone, as I had hoped—but, to do me honor, they had collected some social rubbish called a party and I had to sit at her right hand at

[3] Mr. Hunt, First Lord of the Admiralty.

dinner among people, some of whom I did not know and some of whom I knew and disliked, or rather did not care to see—for two of them had asked me for places which I had not given them.

I got to bed early, slept eight unbroken hours, woke much refreshed, while the remedy I always carry with me had greatly relieved my throat. I shan't leave the house, however, to-day.

This place is sumptuous, and I am well lodged in the State bed-chamber, *très dorée,* with amber satin hangings, cabinets of ebony and gold and many fine pictures. The adjoining chamber, which is my workshop, is not less sumptuous, but is hung with tapestry.

As King Solomon would say, "There are two things which are surprising: why a very rich man often gives you bad wine and, very frequently, bad stationery. A very little more expense in either case would remove the evil of which I now complain: the paper being so limp, and the ink so muddy, and the pens so base and brittle, that I can hardly sign myself

Your affectionate,

D

Buildings always interested Disraeli and he wrote a more detailed description of Duncombe Park to Lady Bradford:

September 20th, 1875

This is a grand place, something between Blenheim and Castle Howard, with a prodigality of timber and vast extents of hanging woods and spreading lawns. When I entered the house by a hall, very like that at Blenheim and

leading to the most beautiful chamber, I think, in England,—a library, 100 feet long, richly decorated, with interesting portraits over the bookcases and many a vase full of wondrous ferns and orchids of extraordinary lustre—I said at once, "This must have been built by Vanbrugh"; but was contradicted. "Then," I replied, "it must have been by an imitator of his." All this led to some research, and in the evening Ernest informed us that he had been looking over some old papers, and found that though the house was built by Mr. Something of York, it is specially mentioned that it was from some designs by John Vanbrugh! A little triumph for your friend. The other rooms in the house suffer a little from the vastness of the Hall and Library. They are exactly as at Blenheim and the edifices of that school, square chambers, very lofty, but not large enough. Here they are gorgeous, being all hung with silk and satin with plenty of pictures by the old masters; and the doors and doorways highly carved and gilt. They have quartered me with much honor—in the State bed-chamber, while an adjoining salon, called the Tapestry Room, is my workshop.

To this description of the place he added a piece of news—"I had a charming letter from the Faery to-day. She approves of all I have done and advised. She writes to me just after she had her parting interview with the Prince of Wales and both, according to her account, were much affected. . . . I go (D.V.) to Gopsal to-morrow where I stay one day and on Thursday I shall be at Whitehall Gardens and go to Hughenden on Friday." In London Disraeli was greeted by alarming news from China:

To Lady Bradford

2 Whitehall Gardens,
September 24th, 1875

I wrote you a hurried line yesterday on my arrival in answer to an interesting letter, and hoped to-day to have written more fully; but it has been a scene of perpetual bustle and business.

Yesterday came a telegram from the Admiral on the Chinese station that hostilities were "possible" and demanding twenty gun-boats instantly, to be made here and put up *there;* but no telegram from our Minister in China. Not a Cabinet Minister in town; Derby, for the first time this year at Knowsley; Hunt in North Hants; not an Under Secretary at the F.O., scarcely a clerk anywhere. Hunt alarmed, and suggesting the assembly of the Cabinet. The meeting of the Cabinet in September would have frightened all Europe. The Admiral, though Admirals seldom make mistakes, was 10 days from the Capital; Wade, our most able Minister, was at Pekin itself. We (that is my poor self and my secretary) telegraphed to Pekin—but it takes 8 days to reach him and 8 to return. But if there be anything in it, Wade must telegraph in the interval. So I am going to Hughenden, instructing Algy Turnor as to what is to be done under all circumstances. It will be amusing if, on the 29th, instead of opening my church I have to come up for a Cabinet Council.

Besides all this, the Duke of Cambridge, fresh from Paris, has been writing to the Queen, suggesting that a detachment of Life Guards should accompany Prince Hal to India. This idea was started months ago and abandoned. Duke

of Cambridge did not know this; Queen very angry; he vindicated himself, but very frightened; and she telegraphed he must settle it with me!

Yours,

D.

Back at Hughenden Disraeli found leisure for research into matters less urgent, but not less interesting, than world politics. Discussion had arisen as to the painter of a portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, in Lord Bradford's collection at Weston. "Last night I made a research about Zuccaro and Mary, Queen of Scots. I will send you a little memo. on the next occasion. It will interest you. Mr. Redgrave is not an oracle. I told you if I got once into my library, I would explain it all." The memo. duly followed:

Hughenden Manor,
September 25th, 1875

Mr. Redgrave's argument that this portrait of Mary could not be by Zuccaro, because highly improbable that, being Court Painter to Queen Elizabeth, he could have gone to Edinburgh to paint her rival, will not hold, as Mary was, and had been for years, a prisoner in England when Zuccaro arrived. Walpole, in his "Anecdotes of Painting" speaks of "the well-known portrait of Mary at Chiswick (removed no doubt to Chatsworth) by Zuccaro, and engraved by Vertue." This is, of course, the original of which the Weston portrait is probably a replica. Now Vertue, whose notes and collections were the avowed foundation of Walpole's admirable work, was celebrated for never having engraved a doubtful portrait. He knew more on these subjects than

any living man and his conscience on matters of historic art was high. He made great researches before he consented to engrave a portrait. It is not probable that the exception to the conduct and conviction of his life, would have been made in so memorable an instance as that of the famous Queen of Scots. Dallaway, no mean authority, in his last and standard edition of Walpole, influenced, no doubt, by the improbability of Zuccaro being permitted to paint Queen Mary in her strict imprisonment, suggests that this may be a copy by Zuccaro of a portrait of Mary; but even Dallaway does not doubt for a moment that the picture at Chiswick was a portrait of Mary, and by Zuccaro. We must remember that Zuccaro was the most famous portrait painter of his age; a man of genius, vain and very arrogant; a man who had quarrelled with Princes; not exactly the man to copy pictures. In the catalogue of King Charles the 1st's fine collection of paintings, sold by the Commonwealth—the most atrocious act of that time—there is mentioned a small whole length of Queen Mary (the King's grandmother) brought from Scotland, and which in all probability was a French picture, brought by the Queen from France when she succeeded to her throne.

This is all, I think, which can be authentically collected on the subject of your picture. Dallaway might maintain that Zuccaro's was a copy of the French portrait. All I will venture to give an opinion on is that the portrait at Chatsworth is one of Queen Mary, and it was painted by Zuccaro.

D

It required little to show how tightly strung were the chords of Disraeli's feelings or how easily they could be

played upon by the hands of those to whose keeping he committed his affections:

To Lady Bradford

Hughenden Manor,
9 o'clock a.m., September 27th, 1875

I scarcely ever remember feeling greater joy when this sunny morn Mr. Baum, at half past 7 o'clock brought me in the beloved handwriting. It was so unexpected; even, it seemed, so impossible. And such a charming letter, so full of that grace of the heart and sweet facility which always win me.

As for the three visits, my remembrance of the first is one unbroken spell of fascination. Perhaps it is, in some degree, because it was an event which has given a color to my life and may mould, perhaps, its remaining years. But there were moments of extreme happiness in the last visit with which the first, with all its vague romance, can scarcely vie. I too enjoyed the dear little drives in the park; I never wanted to go out of it, and dear Ida seemed always to sympathise with us so entirely that she never was in the way. She has written me a very pretty and arch letter in reply to my Sandbeck epistle, quite equal to the occasion.

The "Mary Q. of S." must wait—because there is another subject on which I must write a note, and this may be the last opportunity that I can safely have to accomplish it.

(Here it is enclosed.)

What you say about "Henrietta Temple" greatly interests me. Though I absolutely recoil, generally speaking, from any one who mentions my writings, I am always anxious that you should read them (and you never do) and so give

me your thoughts about them (which you ever omit). It seems to me that on this subject with you, I am like Molière's unfortunate author— He will read his ode to ye young noble, and is so inflamed with his own lyric power that he does not observe that his victim is slyly looking at his watch. I think you know all this, and you have a little wild malice in plaguing me. I have observed it in other things sometimes —but you do everything so gracefully that I never resent it, though mortified; and when mortified I become dull.

My books are the history of my life—I don't mean a vulgar photograph of incidents, but the psychological development of my character. Self inspiration may be egotistical, but it is generally true. You *did* sympathise with "Contarini Fleming" which shows you have no ordinary intelligence. But what may be the degree or character of that intelligence, though I rate it highly, matters little; for you are adored by

D.

And later the same day he wrote again in the same mood:

You said you were glad to see *white paper* the other day. It is strange, but I always used to think that the Queen, persisting in these emblems of woe, indulged in a morbid sentiment. And yet it has become my lot—and seemingly an irresistible one. I lost one who was literally devoted to me —though I was not altogether worthy of her devotion. And when I have been on the point sometimes of terminating this emblem of my bereavement, the thought that there was no longer any being in the world to whom I was an object of concentrated feeling overcame me and the sign remained.

Once—perhaps twice—during the last two years I have indulged in a wild thought it might be otherwise—and then something has always occurred which has dashed me to the earth.

In the same letter, however, he wrote of other matters of the highest importance; and in conveying to Lady Bradford information about developments in China showed, incidentally, that his intuitive grasp of the trend of events in the Far East was such as to cause him to anticipate, by more than a quarter of a century, the policy of Great Britain in contracting an alliance with Japan:

Hughenden Manor,
September 27th, 1875

I have not yet heard from Wade; but I have taken a step in diplomacy which I am sure never was taken before. I have induced the Japanese Minister in England to telegraph to his Government, urging them to offer their mediation in the event of serious difficulty arising between China and England, and to declare that if China will not accept that mediation and act upon it, Japan will join England against her and place a Japanese contingent under the orders of any British forces employed by us against the Celestial Empire. I know not why Japan should not become the Sardinia of the Mongolian East. They are by far the cleverest of the Mongol race. Now you know one of the greatest secrets of State going!

The following day Disraeli received a telegram from Wade at Pekin which inclined him to drastic action—"The

Chinese Government would not promise any of the guarantees . . . He (Wade) threatened to withdraw the Legation at once; but Prince Kung had just written to say that he would call on him on the 21st. He will probably make some overture; but I have been writing to Lord Derby and others all the morning and send a messenger now to Knowsley. I am inclined to strong and prompt measures; would send troops from India and use the flying squadron that is at hand."

CHAPTER XVII

October 1875

LIFE AT HUGHENDEN

Disraeli had taken keen personal interest in the building of the new church at Hughenden; and when the time came he entertained a small party for the consecration of the edifice. "The paucity of female guests at the Manor," he made up for by inviting a number of ladies from the neighbourhood to dinner—"all these were merely dinner guests," he wrote, "but they filled up the rooms in the evening with sufficient petticoats." The ceremony at the church was highly ritualistic:

The sacerdotal procession was tremendous—not only a banner but the bishop's crosier borne, and certainly nearer 100 than 50 clergymen in surplices and parti-colored scarves. I was resolved not to be betrayed into a speech and especially an ecclesiastical speech! But I was obliged to bring in a Protestant sentiment by way of protest . . . Nothing could be more stupid and misapprehensive than the *Times'* remark on Harcourt's speech, which was perfectly playful and good-humored and very happy. He was so good-tempered that he would not allude to the rather ritualistic display—though he was glad of my Protestant phrase which saved us.

On October 1st, he wrote to Lady Bradford from London:

2 Whitehall Gardens,
Friday, October 1st, 1875

Just arrived—find a favorable telegram from Rosslyn much pleased at my enquiry. Lord Headfort is to marry our friend of Windermere, Bradford's cousin, Mrs. Wilson Patten.

No news from the Danube, China, or anywhere else this morning—but much anxiety. Count Andrassy says that had it not been for the *Times* leaders, Herzegovina would have been settled. They think they indicate the English public! They indicate the policy of stockjobbers and idiots. Fancy autonomy for Bosnia with a mixed population; autonomy for Ireland would be less absurd; for there are more Turks in proportion to Christians in Bosnia, than Ulster v. the three other Provinces.

I have sent to Rothschild to ask whether in town and, if so, whether they will give me a dinner. This solitude in a great city is so dreary. I can bear it well and even find a satisfaction in ye country—and feel, indeed, half-inspired—but in London I sigh for a hearth and domestic life. But then I hate clubs, not being fond of male society.

You are wrong about Lady Walter—I don't know her much, but rather relish her. I think she is "sympathica," as somebody says. I did not teach her that word. Don't be jeal.

Your affectionate

D

The Prime Minister's relations with the *Times* did not improve. "You must not trust the *Times* on this matter," he wrote on October 2nd referring to the Chinese trouble, "nor, indeed, on any one of foreign politics; they are either ignorant or corrupt . . . Affairs no doubt are serious, but they are not in the condition that the *Times* or *Reuter* convey. I would believe yet that there will not be war. I am not afraid of the result; what I regret is the cost." And he added a few sentences in explanation of his policy in such matters:

I do not look back on the Abyssinian war with regret; quite the reverse. It was a noble feat of arms and highly raised our prestige in the East. It certainly cost double what was contemplated, and that is likely to be the case in all wars for which I may be responsible. Money is not to be considered in such matters; success alone to be thought of. Abyssinia cost nine millions or so, instead of four or five anticipated; but by that expenditure we secured the business being accomplished in one campaign. Had there been a second campaign it would probably have been nineteen millions, and perhaps failed from climate, or another or more prepared military resistance.

And in these matters he was usually right:

Hughenden Manor,
October 16th, 1875

China has been settled nearly a week. All we know, of course, is by telegrams. I am curious to learn, which we

shall do when the Despatches arrive, how far my Japanese move contributed to the result. Certainly the Abyssinian Campaign had something to do with it. And by the by, you talked of the cost of that expedition in treasure and life. A good deal of treasure, of which I have written to you before; but no life. A march of 400 miles through an unknown country of mountain passes, and the army brought back to their place of disembarkment without the loss of a single life! There is no similar instance on record.

But before he heard of the satisfactory settlement in China, he had written of many other matters. At the beginning of October he had been summoned to Sandringham to bid farewell to the Prince of Wales before he embarked on his visit to India. "Here is a house full of company," he told Lady Chesterfield on October 4th, "and has been so ever since they came down here. The word of command is, constant distraction and no time for scenes and sentiment. But poor Lady![1] She feels the approaching separation very much. . . . The Prince is prepared for attempts at assassination. Every precaution will be devised and taken; but the very possibility of such a contingency is awful! He suffers himself now that the hour is at hand; but still wishes to go." In a letter of the same date to Lady Bradford, he gave a long and much more detailed account of his visit to Sandringham:

. . . The poor Princess lives in an impending Suttee; unceasing festivals, sweetmeats and the din of tambourines,

[1] The Princess of Wales.

and expected to smile amid the preparations of sacrifice. I believe, though this is a great secret, that he intends her even to cross *la manche,* so as to postpone to the last moment the last pang. I am told that he feels it himself, now that the crisis is so near, and never realised it before. He has so kind a heart that this is but natural and inevitable. Besides, he is really fond of this place, is making endless improvements in his grounds under the counsels of Mr. Thomas, "a gentleman" he said to me, "not to be described as inexpensive," and who came down yesterday to look after the progress of a new lake, for which he is feed like a physician. Then we are building cottages on a new plan which I should think was our own, for we are very fond of it; and we have prize beasts and patent sheep and all that sort of thing. These, with charming children whom he is constantly embracing, and a wife whom he really loves—I need not say that all this combined, might make a man feel occasionally dispirited, without his absolutely repenting the considerable enterprise in which he is about to embark. . . .

I write you to-day because this is a memorable visit and we may be, with respect to it, on the eve of great events. Nothing else would induce me with this paper which is like greasy tin. I cannot understand people giving you bad stationery. It costs so little more to give good. It is like men carrying umbrellas to save their hats, that being the least expensive portion of our raiment—except in the case of dear Royston.

After the Princesses had retired, who, I ought to have told you, were, besides our sweet hostess, the Duchess of Teck as well as the Duchess of Edinburgh, the Prince begged me to take the latter's seat—and to the sullen indignation of

Bernal Osborne, for two hours, he says, but I should certainly think more than one, the Prince opened his heart entirely to me. There was nobody near us. He was most grateful to me for inducing the Queen to withdraw her refusal to the Princess and all her children going to Denmark for Xmas and a good time afterwards; he settled with me the trustees for the Princess' dowry which had been neglected; he asked me to write to him confidentially when I had time, which from a suggestion that had been made to me I was prepared to offer; and he said and suggested many other things which I might fairly say implied his trust and affection. He said two things which I will note—He contemplated attempts at assassination, and then he said "I think you might have given me a little more money." I replied, "The most fortunate thing for your Royal Highness that ever occurred was my parsimony. It has changed the public opinion of the country and the general sentiment now —and it will remain for a long time—is, that the Prince of Wales is not spending enough. If your R.H. is wise, and I am sure you will be, this feeling may be turned to good account. He seemed amused and satisfied, quite satisfied. Really thought it was for the best. I understand, however, when among "his creatures," he talks big of spending, if requisite, a million and all that. . . .

It was nearly one o'clock when the Prince tried to seduce me to the bowling room and its attendant fumes, but I was firm and retired, and he went to begin his day.

Yesterday, as B.O. says, was Church and luncheon. "I seldom take either," he added. I took both; and then we had to go over 14 acres of *jardin potager,* and visit royal

farms and dairies. The weather was not pleasant, otherwise it was not dull. The glass houses are striking; one of them containing a grove of banana trees with large thick trunks and weighed down with clustering fruit, remarkable; and a parrot house of the Princess' with great variety of birds of that species, noisy but amusing.

At dinner I sate next to the Princess of Wales. And she had much to confide to me. But the difficulties of conversing with her, never slight, were increased by the chosen scene of her secret thoughts; and while with strained attention I devoured her words instead of my dinner, there was always an entrée or a sauce interposed or offered at the critical moment. However I got through pretty well. She began by saying, "When you were here two years ago, you said you would write a book for me about sympathy—now I want sympathy indeed." That was not a bad beginning—but, as I have told you before—she is no fool. She had a wondrous dress on in the morning—with a golden pattern of Egyptian work, and Princess Mary said, "she was like Cleopatra." "Cleopatra is not one of my heroines"—"I hope not," she replied. Somebody asked her if she liked reviews; they were talking of Aldershot. "I am very fond of soldiers," she said; "I always think I was intended for a nursery maid."

The children amused me. . . . The girls all good-looking —the youngest very pretty, an Elfin face different from her sisters. They were beautifully dressed and came in at luncheon at which the two boys dined. What do you think of these young ladies, in their glittering costumes, being sent on their hands and feet under the table, at which there were

30 guests, and principally to pinch Mr. Sykes' legs. They had to count the guests on each side to secure the right man; but made mistake of one and as Mr. Sykes was sitting next to me they began to pinch me instead. I thought it was a dog and gave a kick—and as I had not observed their sudden disappearance was truly very much surprised when in time I became acquainted with this new pastime of Princesses. . . .

Your affectionate,

D

From Sandringham Disraeli returned to Hughenden, where he proposed entertaining the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lady Northcote. This, surely, provided him with an excuse for attempting to persuade Lady Bradford to repeat her former visit. "The Hardys can't come," he wrote on October 7th. "Their house will be full of friends. Surely it would be kind of Bradford and not disagreeable, to pay me a little visit?" Lord Bradford accepted the invitation; but Lady Bradford found herself unable to accompany him. Disraeli felt grievously hurt:

Hughenden Manor,
October 11th, 1875

I have just got your letter. I did not know that so many days had elapsed since I wrote to you—but it is possible. I have not had spirit to write and have not now. I was not angry at your not coming, only mortified—and in our relations unhappy; that is not a mode of feeling, on my part, so rare as I could wish. Considering that we had not seen each other for a month and that there is little prospect of

our meeting again this year, I thought it was not impossible to real affection that some effort might have been made to accomplish what I so deeply desired. You give many reasons for not coming, but they are inconsistent with each other, or at least, are so to my dull intellect. I had asked Lady Mabel and I need not say, particularly as my house is not full, I should have only been too happy to see Lady Florence; and if the house had been full, where there's a will, &c. But you never asked or suggested anything; the only thing clear in your letter was that you could not come, and even that you did not regret. But why should you come? One is obliged, in such circumstances, to ask one's self such a question. What on earth is there to tempt you to come here? My unhappy imagination invests you always with the feelings which influence and animate myself; and then I am disappointed with what you say or do. I have no right to be angry and I am ashamed of myself for appearing to be so. You seemed once to respond to my idea of sympathy. I often ask myself—is there a single point on which we do sympathise? I fear the response would be dreary; but however desolating to myself, the fact cannot and ought not to be imputed as a fault to you. . . .

I fear, nay I am sure, Bradford will have a dull visit; there are none here at this moment except the Northcotes, all my appeals having been in vain. But I will do my best to amuse him, and expect Bernal Osborne to-morrow, who will be more efficient than your mortified and unhappy

D.

Some days later he wrote, still under the influence of his disappointment, to Lady Chesterfield:

Hughenden Manor,
October 16th, 1875

Dear Darling,

I am very much pressed with affairs, and have as much to do as I can easily remember—except during the preparation of the Reform Act. Write to me, therefore, even if I do not answer. Your letters are a pleasing distraction for me, as one cannot be always working, and in loneliness like mine it is refreshing to be remembered.

China is settled—the Herzegovina virtually so. There are no worries, as you call them; for the Admiralty affair is only a technical blunder. I ordered it to be suspended. That stopped agitation. Besides, public worries are nothing; they are not the things that do the mischief.

If you wish to oblige and please me, you will allow me to have a copy made by a skilful artist, of your dear daughter; that I may place her at Hughenden. Lady Derby's portrait came this day: yours has been placed for sometime. Bradford admired it. There is also Lady Blessington. Perhaps you will say she ought not to be in such society. Pardon her, she was kind to me!

The portrait of the cold-hearted Selina is not here.

Your affectionate

D

But a kind word from Lady Bradford had magic properties and wrought an immediate transformation in his mood:

Hughenden Manor,
October 18th, 1875

I got your delightful note this morning at 7 o'clock, but I was rising! for I had to be at Aylesbury between 10 and 11—Quarter Sessions; but a great day of many magistrates to choose a chairman *vice* the Duke of Buckingham gone to Madras. I have this instant returned. I would not stay even to lunch lest my messenger, who is waiting, should lose the London post; but I have only a few minutes to do many things.

This to thank you for remembering solitary me—and to say I will try and write by post to you later in the day—*that you will get by second post to-morrow.*

The clock goes on reminding me of you all day long—at this moment! So you can't be forgotten.

Your

D

Disraeli loved his books—". . . at half past one," he wrote, "the messenger arrives and as now I am not at home to any human being, I work at my boxes in the library. It is a favorite room of mine, and I like to watch the sunbeams on the bindings of the books." He longed to show them to Lady Bradford. His Giuccardini and his Machiavelli were modern editions; but he had many volumes of greater rarity which he thought would charm her eye and taste:

Some day, when I have time, which I really have not now, for only to you could I write this, I will tell you about *Somnium Poliphili,* the dream of Poliphilus, one of the most beautiful volumes in the world and illustrated through-

out by Giovanni Bellini, as only in the Renaissance they could illustrate. But I was delighted yesterday, as I have been delighted before and often, by a thin folio of the sacred time. It is a letter by Cardinal Bembo to Gulio de Medici, opening the Cardinal's grand scheme for the nation to renounce writing in Latin and dead languages and dare to form a popular style in their own beautiful vernacular. The subject, the author, the beautiful printing, the pages, 400 years old but without a stain—all these are interesting circumstances; but then the exquisite binding with the Tiara and the Keys, and the arms of the Medici boldly tooled upon the side of the book—for Gulio had, in the interval, become Pope Clement VII! This was his own copy and must have been captured and secured in the famous sack of Rome by the Constable of Bourbon.

I am very tired and could only write to you.

Adieu!

D

Comments on Foreign Affairs in the newspapers caused the Prime Minister much annoyance. It was reported that Austria was to occupy Bosnia, and that England would despatch a fleet to the Bosphorus:

To Lady Bradford

October 21st, 1875

There's not a word of truth in the rumor—not a syllable. I had a telegram from Vienna yesterday morning and everything was in quite a different mood. The fact is, as I told you before, all are perplexed and they want us to move. Why? It would be as great a mistake as if I

had dissolved Parliament in 1873 instead of making Gladstone do it. As everybody believes this rumor, and it may be the subject of a stock-jobbing article in the *Times* tomorrow, and disturb even the joyous bowers of Weston, I send you this line.

Nevertheless there was enough to worry him, as he made clear in a paragraph at the end of the same letter:

I have to-day a letter of four sheets (sixteen pages) from the Faery, for though D.V. she is to see me soon, there are points which she wishes me to think over previously. There are some nuts to crack, I can tell you, and I have not a very easy visit next Thursday.

Not least among the subjects upon which he was called upon to exercise his ingenuity was patronage—a topic which was apt to induce a mood of cynicism. "Yes, I have got two Deaneries," he wrote on the 22nd; "but not exactly, for Ripon will not be vacant till next month. They bother one, as you say; but not nearly so much as some other things of the same kind which are giving me much trouble. I think poor Adderley may remain after all, but with a new colleague." After his "terrific blunder" in connection with the Merchant Shipping Bill, Disraeli had intended moving Sir C. Adderley from the Board of Trade; but on second thoughts he left him there, giving him as Parliamentary Secretary a rising man in Edward Stanhope in place of George Bentinck. But before he closed his letter to Lady Bradford he had some remarks to make on the question of patronage in general:

. . . After all, it is affectation to talk of the bore and bother of patronage and all that. The sense of power is delightful. It is amusing to receive the letters I do, especially since Deaneries were in the market. I had no idea that I was an object of so much esteem, confidence, public and private, and respectful affection—and as nobody in the world, were I to die to-morrow, would give up even a dinner party, one is sensible of the fun of life. I believe it to be quite true that there is strong movement going on to restore the Queen of Spain; Alphonse is "to be sent on his travels—to finish his education."

He had another illustration of "the esteem" in which he was held, and he duly reported it in a letter the next day—"It is a 'concerted action' on the part of Henry Lennox. After never writing to me for a year and always avoiding me, I received a letter yesterdy—*'My dearest D.,'* from *'Your affectionate Henry,'* with a basket of bananas from Kew!" The nature of the "concerted action" becomes clear from a letter to Lady Chesterfield—"If Lennox gave you a picture for which I never sate, it must be a made-up thing." He added that the same individual had offered to send plants to Selina. "The fact is, he is starved out. I hear from town that he has actually shaken hands with Mitford.[2] We must give him a golden bridge."

In the hope of seeing Lady Bradford, Disraeli returned to London some days before the meeting of the first autumn Cabinet:

[2] Bertram Mitford, afterwards Lord Redesdale, who served as Secretary to the Board of Works under Lord Henry Lennox as President.

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 3rd, 1875

. . . This was about the time I had originally intended to come up and all my colleagues will be here this evening except, I believe, John Manners. However, I am not sorry now that I came up some days ago, for matters are large and pressing. Five weeks ago Russia, and indeed all the great Powers, agreed "the Herzegovina question was settled." The Prince of Servia changed his Ministry at their dictation to ensure that result. But this extraordinary, and quite unforeseen, bankruptcy of the Porte has set everything again in flame, and I really believe "the Eastern Question" that has haunted Europe for a century, and which I thought the Crimean War had adjourned for half another, will fall to my lot to encounter—dare I say—to settle?

Fortunately R. Bourke, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, is in town, and he comes to work with me. I find him most intelligent, extremely well informed and if not up in everything, knowing how to set about getting what is wanted. I have seen the Ambassadors: they know nothing and flatter themselves that I believe they exercise a wise reserve. The fact is their Governments don't inform them, and these Governments themselves are very puzzled. Beust is fantastical and dreamy and keeps saying—"my only and last instructions from Andrassy were to co-operate with you." I know privately that Andrassy changes his mind every week or day, and has half a dozen intrigues at work which will defeat each other. As for the charming Schouvaloff I am perfectly convinced that, instead of being a deep and *rusé* diplomat, he does not know the A.B.C. of his business—and is perfectly sincere in his frequent

asseverations to that effect. But the most amusing thing is the mystery of that tall Münster, while a confidential Despatch from Odo Russell this morning informs us that Bismarck remains in sullen solitude and will see no one, nor write, nor speak. The Emperor is so afraid of him that he dare not remonstrate with him; the Crown Prince has given up speaking to him on public matters from pure weariness; while the great mass of the Court and officials only dare mention the ineffable name in a whisper and then look round, though Bismarck is 100 miles away. The truth is, I have no doubt, he is watching for some misunderstanding between Russia and Austria, and then he will be communicative enough.

You mentioned to me once something you had heard about the Queen of Spain and her possible return to her country. I told you then there was some foundation for the rumor. What do you think happened in Madrid a few days ago? Her fancy man, originally, I believe, a bull-fighter—I can't recall his name, but I think Marfory—appeared in Madrid and arrived at the Palace with a letter to the King from his mother. The King sent for his Ministers, and after consultation, Marfory was arrested and is now in prison.

I am sorry I said anything in my last letter which annoyed you. I did not intend it. It must have been an involuntary groan. I did not intend or wish to write, having nothing to say which could cheer or charm; but I remembered that it would be the second time that I had sent you an enclosure without a syllable, and I thought that an ungracious return for the kind and playful vein in which you rallied me on the omission.

The great affairs with which I have to deal ought to satisfy the intellect and the feelings, even if I were young; but at my time of life to sigh for human sympathy is doubtless a great deficiency and a great mistake. But so it is; such is my nature. I am what I am. And even with the Eastern Question on my hands I am thinking of something else, or I should not be writing these lines.

D

CHAPTER XVIII

November–December 1875

A MAN OF MANY MOODS

Of developments abroad Disraeli wrote freely, as is apparent from the letters quoted in the previous chapter, to Lady Bradford. He was not so communicative where his own colleagues were concerned. "Lord Derby arrived last night (November 3rd) at five o'clock and came on to me immediately. He was with me two hours. We resolved not to bring the Turkish affairs at present before the Cabinet but conduct them together." A similar decision was arrived at in the case of the problems presented by Central Asia—"Lord Salisbury has just gone and we have agreed to do with respect to Central Asia exactly as Lord Derby and myself had agreed to do about Turkey." Lady Bradford was none the less kept constantly informed: "Schouvaloff says that there is no agreement whatever between Russia and Austria about the Herzegovina Note, and that Beust who regretted that Lord Derby would be deprived of his Lancashire Christmas and be obliged to return to town for the Note, is an old *farceur*."[1] At this juncture the Prime Minister's troubles were added to by an outbreak in Malaya:

[1] Letter of November 8th, 1875.

To Lady Chesterfield

November 11th, 1875

The Lord Mayor's Banquet seems to have been a great success. I had an enthusiastic reception and spoke pretty well. . . . The Herzegovina business does not improve, and will not for a long time—if it does then. The Malay war is not pleasant. So you see a strong and successful Government has its cares.

To Lady Bradford he wrote—"The Faery has already pounced on the Malay insurrection as a reason why the Prince's visit to India should be curtailed!" For the next day or two he had little news of affairs abroad to communicate; but he found plenty of interest to write about. Thus on the 12th—"There is no news to-day of any kind either from Malay-land or the Danube. I have got a K.C.B. vacant and have written to the Faery proposing it should be given to your friend Wade. I hope I shall hear from you to-morrow and in a cheerful tone and some details of your life. If I were not in office I should go to the United States." And on the 13th:

. . . You will be glad to hear that the Guildhall speech really effected all my purpose and has been hailed by all parties—in short, by the country.

In the hunting field yesterday—Vale of Aylesbury—the great Mr. Horsman, my "superior person" who always decries everything and everybody, gave it as his opinion that "it was the greatest speech since Mr. Pitt." But after all

what is to come? My speech is only *point de jour:* the day has hardly broken and we shall probably have a flaming sun and a sultry sky. I hope our sixty years of peace have not been a Capua to us and that the English people have yet some spirit. "Live in a blaze and in a blaze expire!" would content me, but I won't be snuffed out. Enough egotism, and always disgusting, even to you.

I went yesterday with "Mary Derby," whom I continue to call to her face "Lady Salisbury"—most unfortunate—to Mr. Liebricht—an oculist in Albany Street, a famous man who has only been here two years. I have seen double with my left eye for years, but would consult no one—for I assumed it was cataract which my father and grandfather had and did not wish to be convinced of the inevitable. But it is no such thing; a change in the focus of my eye which a particular glass cured. Lady Derby had suffered from the same malady and he had cured her. That was why I went.

The oculist is an extraordinary man and says that very few people need ever be blind. The great mischief is produced, or aggravated, by the want of scientific glasses. He told me that I had been using a wrong glass all my life. He is not a quack who makes or sells glasses. He only writes prescriptions and he sent me with my prescription to an optician. I mention all this because I have heard you complain of your eyes. It would be a sovereign well spent to see this remarkable man. He is the oculist who discovered the cause of all those outrageous effects which Turner produced in his pictures of late years—those wonderful yellows and distorted forms which his admirers kept on declaring were fresh triumphs of art and genius. The

pupil of Turner's eye was in a state of disorder and change —but remediable. . . .

Though the Cabinet was meeting and great events were being discussed behind its closed doors, Disraeli's letters for the next few days are interesting chiefly for the light which they throw upon the strange vagaries of his moods. When dealing with public affairs he was often elated; but when his excitement abated he became strangely dispirited and he then wrote in the cynical tone of a bored and disillusioned man:

November 16th

There is a great deal going on; but nothing to report at this moment externally. At home Adderley after infinite trouble stays, and E. Stanhope is launched as Secretary and I hope will do the work. The Admiralty bothers me at a moment when one wants fleets! Your description of the party at Willey,[2] perfect! I know all about that old army surgeon. Cis[3] wanted me to knight him; but the Faery had, very properly, kicked previously against some other equally irrational honors!

November 17th

Here all is gloom, for Father Thames has risen from his bed and submerged all his dependencies except Whitehall Gardens. We are yet spared. . . . Hardinge Giffard[4] is Solicitor General. I have got a seat for him. To-day the Cabinet was at two, and it is now late.

[2] Lord Forester's country seat.
[3] Lord Forester.
[4] Afterwards Lord Halsbury.

It meets to-morrow. Affairs cannot be more interesting; but it is impossible to write about them—scarcely to speak. It is worth living in such times! And what will come? The miserable crew who were quarrelling over the spoil will, of course, murmur and tell their grief to "George." Though distant and immensely occupied I send you 1,000 kind thoughts.

November 18th

No news from Malay-land and shall not [hear] for days. Although there are two rival cables to that part of the globe, strange to say both are broken! If it were a more important struggle I should not deem it chance. It was only a violent and resentful sea. Luckily our orders for troops, etc. went out in time. Telegrams all day long from Vienna, St. Petersburg and Paris—and sometimes Berlin. I do not believe in the battle—our consuls have sent us no such intelligence—however there will be battles enough I ween. Great Powers all peaceable in words, especially since the Guildhall speech. Read has resigned the Secretaryship of Local Government Board! What shall I do? I believe you were right about Cochrane.[5] He would be incompetent and equally dissatisfied.

November 20th

I thought the "stupid" letter very agreeable, and rather clever. I am much diverted by what H.T[6]. said, and I agree with you in liking him. Indeed, I think he is really the man to suit you, having all the qualities

[5] Mr. Baillie Cochrane, afterwards Lord Lamington.
[6] Lord Hartington.

you require and appreciate: a certain distinction duly made up of fashion, rank, intelligence, and personal influence, and none of the imagination and surplus sensitiveness which disturbs the cream of existence, and which, though for a moment interesting from novelty, are ultimately found to harass and embarrass life. "He is easy to get on with because he is not spoilt." We know who is constantly said to be "spoilt," though perhaps most unjustly, and who, therefore, is not easy to get on with. I am not the least jealous in saying this. I have quite given up that. Time and loneliness have convinced me how unreasonable I have been.

The Faery, as I think I told you, comes to Windsor on the 24th and she writes to-day that I am to come to her on the 25th and stay. I have had a correspondence with her in cypher during the last week, and have got pretty expert now in managing the mystical book. Still, I often wish for the charming assistant, who helped me once, but I fear and feel may never help me again.

C.[7] after three days' meditation has refused the greater I.[8] It was the children, and that only, which prevented him. The lesser, but still great I.[9] is not so pressing or so difficult.

I really can't consult J.M.[10] about Cochrane or anything else—his wife plagues me so with her letters and endless invitations and messages through "John." To-day she writes and wants me to dine there because "Henry[11] has

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[7] Lord Carnarvon.
[8] India. Lord Northbrook had announced his wish to come home.
[9] Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, which the Duke of Abercorn wished to give up.
[10] Lord John Manners.
[11] Mr. Henry Manners afterwards Duke of Rutland.

come back and will tell you all about Weston." I cannot go there. I live quite alone. I do not even go to Piccadilly Terrace, where there is ever something to learn and somebody distinguished to meet. Monty has a perpetual invitation here, but he has only availed himself of it once. I have not written to Bretby again for a week. I cannot do it; my heart is ossifying.

If I could settle the Eastern Question, I would say *"Nunc dimittis!"*

Your aff.

D

To Lady Chesterfield

2 Whitehall Gardens,
November 21st, 1875

Dear Darling,

Business has been engrossing—but I hope on Tuesday to close the Cabinets—and on Thursday I shall go to the Queen, and so wind up affairs till after Xmas. At least, these are my hopes. I have been not so good a correspondent as I could wish to you, but really, I have had nothing to tell except Cabinet secrets. My private life is one of complete solitude, and the day passes without my speaking to any one except on business. There are a few people in town, but I shrink from them—my depression is so great that were it not for public life I should subside into a state of coma. There is nobody here who in the least interests me and I cannot keep my attention to their chatter.

There is no truth in the story of Austria occupying the

revolted provinces: nor, as a general rule, is there any truth in anything in the newspapers. I believe that stock-jobbing is the inspirer of all the journals, your famous friend the *Times* not excepted.

This cold weather will cure the country. I am sorry Margaret is not with you. I should like to hear her sing.

Your affect.

D

To Lady Bradford

November 22nd

. . . I am sorry you sent back the book. I never meant it to be returned. I had hoped when I brought it up to you, that you would have asked me to write your name in it; and then, when disappointed, I thought I would ask you to let me do so. But you seemed so cold and indifferent about the affair that I relapsed into my shell. As you know Lord Milton or his belongings, I send you a poem which he has privately printed and which will at least amuse you. There is not a line that scans so far as I can judge by peeping at it, and it does not amount even to doggerel. But considering the author, it may be looked on as "a curiosity of literature." In the last page but one, I observe, he accuses your friend Prince Christian of bigamy! . . . I remain your not very happy, but your affectionate

D

On November 25th he had news of the utmost importance to communicate to Lady Bradford:

England, the Khedive
of Egypt's interest in
the Suez Canal.
We have had all the
gamblers, capitalists
financiers of the world,
organized & ~~[illegible]~~
platooned in bands
of plunderers, arrayed
against

2, Whitehall Gardens,
S.W.

against us, & secret
emissaries in every
corner, & have baffled
them all, & have
never been suspected.
The day before yesterday,
Lesseps, whose Company
has the remaining
shares, backed by the
French

French government,
whose agent he was,
made a great offer.
Had it succeeded, the
whole of the Suez
Canal wd. have belonged
to France & B. might
have shut it up!

We have given the Khedive
4 millions

millions sterling for his interest, & run the chance of Parliament supporting us. – We c^d not call them together for the matter, for that w^d. have blown everything to the skies, or to Hades.

The Tacy is in exclaim^n about^n

this

"this great & important
~~[illegible]~~ Event" — wants "to
know all about it when
Mr D. comes down to day".

I have rarely been
thro' a week like the
last — & am so dy in a
state of prostration — coma
— sorry I have to go down to
Windsor — still more sorry
not to have had a line
to day, wh: I. have soothed,
v affectionate Ep.

down to Windsor—still more sorry not to have had a line to-day, which would have soothed

Your affectionate,

D

P.S.—Though secret here, the telegraph will send the news from Egypt, I doubt not, to-day.

On November 25th, Disraeli went to Windsor and wrote to Lady Bradford in the highest spirits:

Windsor Castle,
November 26th, 1875

A most hurried line to tell you that nothing could be more successful—I might say triumphant—than my visit. The Faery was most excited about Suez, said "what she liked most was, it was a blow at Bismarck" referring, I apprehend, to his insolent declarations that England had ceased to be a political power. This remark she frequently made, showing it was the leading idea of her mind.

I got here at a quarter to 6, and was summoned to the presence exactly at 6. She received me almost with caresses, absolutely said she never saw me looking so well and all sorts of things. When I could get to general business, though I had an awful catalogue of demands and suggestions they were comparatively soon exhausted—no difficulties made, everything granted, nothing but smiles and infinite *agaceries*. At dinner I sate next to Princess Beatrice (Baby) who is expanding into a very handsome woman, more striking than Louise. She was next to the Queen and the conversation was pretty brisk. "Dearest Jane" [12] was on

[12] Lady Ely, wife of the 3rd Marquess; a lady of the bedchamber to Queen Victoria.

my other side and she told me many secrets, but alas! had they been in the tongue of the dwellers at Suez, they could not be more unintelligible. It is provoking to be told, in confidence, something which she could only tell to me, and not catch a word.

There were only courtiers at dinner. After dinner, although I had been in audience till half past 7, the Faery came up to me again and was not only most gracious, but most interesting and amusing—all about domestic affairs. She showed me, by the by, at dinner, a couple of telegrams she had received that morning from the Prince of Wales and she wished me to write to him about Suez and all that. "I wish it," she said, "because he likes you."

Lady Biddulph said after dinner she should resign if the Primo dined often there, as she could not stand while the Faery was talking to me. By ye by, Lochiel on his marriage will resign his groomship. Think of one.

I have only seen the *Times* this morning—now 10 o'clock —and in half an hour I go back to town, but I shall be so busy there that I think the best chance is to write to you now. The *Times* has only got half the news and very inaccurate, but it is evidently staggered. I believe the whole country will be with me. The Faery thinks so.

Adieu! dearest of correspondents.

D

Disraeli's satisfaction over the deal with the Khedive was natural, and before leaving Windsor he returned to the subject in a further letter to Lady Bradford:

November 30th

The Faery was in the tenth Heaven, having received a letter of felicitations from the King of the Belges on "the greatest event of modern politics"; "Europe breathes again," etc. etc. It seems that Prince Gortchakoff had arranged to call at Berlin on his way home and just catch Prince Bismarck after his five months' retirement, and then confer together and settle, or seem to settle, the Eastern question. It must have been during this meeting, or the day before it took place, that the great news arrived which—as it is supposed they were going to settle everything without consulting England—was amusing! Bismarck called on Odo Russell but the latter unhappily was not at home. Odo called at the Foreign Office and saw Bülow who handed him a telegram from Münster saying "the purchase of the Suez Canal has been received by the whole English nation with enthusiasm"; but not a word could be got out of Bülow himself.

From Windsor Disraeli went to Longleat on a visit to Lord Bath, and from Longleat to Crichel:

To Lady Chesterfield

Crichel,
December 5th, 1875

Dear Darling,

I arrived here yesterday after a terrible journey from a very cold house to one still colder; for though the mansion is sunny enough, my rooms look to the North and nothing can exceed their gloom and discomfort.

Selina arrived here after me, but I have had no conversa-

tion with her and probably shall have none. She rather avoids me. I believe the house is soon to be very full of people; but the sooner I get away from it the happier for me. And yet, I know, I shall find escape very difficult. . . .

I detest country houses. Nothing reconciles me to them except the presence of some one who deeply interests me, and that is a rare character to find. I have given over attempting to find it in this world.

I think the Suez business has pleased the country, though by the time Parliament meets I doubt not the Opposition will have got up a counter-case.

Your affect.

D

By the middle of December he was back at Windsor:

To Lady Bradford

Windsor Castle,
December 12th, 1875

I got to London before three o'clock and though I had only an hour and a half managed to get through a great deal of business. I arrived here a little before six and had scarcely cleared myself from the dust of travel, for I had no time to do that in town, than I was sent for, and had an audience of nearly an hour and a half—but, as you predicted, no business at all, but the most animated, interesting and confidential gossip, which I must keep till we meet. One point interested me much. Speaking of the luxury of the day and the expenditure of some of her children, she said—"All I know is, I was brought up very differently. I never had a room to myself; I never had a sofa, nor an easy

chair; and there was not a single carpet that was not threadbare." She rather chaffed me, but very good humoredly, about all my visits; a little jeal; but made no difficulty about anything and acceded to the appointment of Harry Thynne, as well as Sydney Turner for the new dean, and other things.

The Princess of Wales is alone here, and the dinner was the smallest I ever recollect—only her, Baby and Master Leopold and 3 courtiers. After dinner I had a long conversation with the Princess of Wales which began thus—"I have been admiring your velvet shoes, I think everybody ought to wear them."

I had sate next to her at dinner, but though she was gracious and gay, confidential confab was impossible, for she was next to the Faery—and she had a great deal of confidential confab in store. I am to pay her a visit to hear it. I fear great difficulties in a certain quarter. . . .

Your affec.

D

As not infrequently happened, elation was succeeded by depression; and from Ashridge, Lord Brownlow's country seat, Disraeli wrote in one of his most gloomy moods:

December 17th

I could write to no one but you, for I am not in cue and must make up for this sorry epistle on another occasion. I have had some difficult and personally distressing business (public), since I arrived here, which has harassed and shaken me, and is not settled. There is a gay party, I believe, here—to me like all other parties. The

gaiety seems conventional. . . . I suppose I shall hear from you in time. I go up to London to-morrow and at 5 o'clock from there to Hatfield. Go I must, or there will be all sorts of misunderstandings; but I would about as lief go to my execution. I think my nerves are much unsettled.

The Duke of Richmond made a capital speech at Chichester. Knowledge is the foundation of eloquence, and he knew what he was talking about. It will do much good—and that is saying a great deal of a speech.

There was a grand concert here last night. . . . Neruda played—I need not say divinely—and there was plenty of bad singing. Neruda reminded me of our first meeting at Orleans House and my subsequent introduction of her under a vizor in "Lothair"; but as you never read my works it is useless to refer to this which must be unintelligible to you. I hope you are well and happier than I am.

Yours ever,

D

The thought of Lady Bradford's indifference rankled, for in his account of the concert to Lady Chesterfield, in which he described Mlle. Neruda as having the appearance of "an angel with a fiddle in an old picture," he said—"I witnessed her debut at Orleans House nine years ago and afterwards sketched her in 'Lothair,' for which she was very grateful and always reminds me of it. I dare say you remember the scene as you have read all my works, and often remind me of them. Selina has read very few and does not remember a line she has read."

He returned to the subject in a letter to Lady Bradford herself on December 23rd:

You revive the controversy about reading my books. I thought it was closed by mutual consent. So don't think me quarrelsome or captious if I for a moment recur to it. Those volumes contain a multiplicity of characters and opinions; and yet I don't remember your ever having referred to a single one in all our frequent interviews. *Prima facie,* therefore, I had a right to assume you were unacquainted with them. If you had read the books the result is still more mortifying, as their impression must have been very transient. You will exclaim to yourself—"Oh! the vanity of authors." I dare say all authors are vain even if they be Ministers of State; but I don't think it is exactly that. I often feel my writing days are not over and there is nothing in life I so much appreciate as a female critic. Her taste and tact, and feeling and judgment, are invaluable and inspiring. Therefore I confess I was grieved when I found one important and interesting tie between us could not exist—and that, too, when our sources of sympathy are, I often feel, not too numerous.

His Christmas letter to her was, however, written in a happier frame of mind:

Hughenden Manor,
Xmas Day, 1875

Your Xmas gift greeted me this morn and lightened my heart. I don't know which to admire most—its grace or its use. Yes! I watched its birth at Crichel—in happy moments, and it came to me here as something I had known in a previous and brighter existence. It was put to immediate use, for it was my companion at Church this morn-

ing and I think it will not easily quit me, reminding me ever of one whose acquaintance has lent sweetness and solace to the sunset of my life. . . .

The Faery wrote me on my birthday the kindest letter I almost ever received. I would send it to you, but it refers also to some business. Therefore, at the risk of being thought vain I will copy what she said, but it is only for your eye—as I dislike to appear boastful on such matters. "The Queen offers her warmest wishes for many happy returns of Mr. Dis' birthday. His devotion and extreme personal kindness towards herself and her service, public as well as private, she feels deeply and gratefully. She has ordered a copy, by an excellent artist, of the picture painted last spring by Herr Von Angelis of herself, as a present for Mr. Disraeli, which she hopes will be finished by the time she returns to Windsor. The Queen sends a little card for the Season". . . . The "card for the Season" is wonderful and much inscribed. I have put the little white mouse on it, to guard it and take care that it does not blow away!

Ever your

D

The year closed upon Disraeli wrestling in solitude at Hughenden with work which poured in upon him in a never-ending stream:

To Lady Bradford

December 29th

Monty left me yesterday for Easton saying, as he went, and after a rather hard week, that he thought

nothing would occur before his return. I have not had a moment's rest. It has rained telegrams cyphered and clear, and I am alone. He comes back on Saturday to go away again in eight and forty hours to Belton. He is like one of those short-time soldiers we hear of so often now who enlist several times in the course of the year and desert as often. But I cannot scold him for he is the only person in the world except one, who has never offended my taste.

Carnarvon is in Somersetshire and worries me to death with telegrams of four pages; he is a very clever fellow, but the greatest fidget in the world. Perak, however, looks better. Northbrook's recall will soon be announced. It was delayed till the Prince left Calcutta. Lytton goes to India. "He will die there," says Derby, "but die Governor-General. Perhaps it is worth while." Characteristic!

December 30th, 1875

I am satisfied with the way in which the peerages are received—I will not say pleased; I am not pleased easily. Indeed, I do not know that anything pleases me except yourself and letters from you; and having received two to-day, I am not only pleased but joyful. . . . The messenger has just arrived. He does not stay here scarcely two hours. A tremendous box from the Faery, and letters and boxes without end. No Monty—that you know—but a person whom you condescend to mention is also away—his week's holiday. He went the same day as Monty. I have literally since Tuesday not spoken to a human being. The other men are good servants and anxious to please and aid me; but they require instruction and I calculate it's better to be inconvenienced and ill-served,

than talk and explain. It must end. But there is always something to annoy me. Unhappily there never was so much business. I am interested in your reading and in everything that concerns you, and I am grateful for your letters.

In hurry and haste—but affectionate,

D.

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